

WHY DO YOU PREACH THAT WAY? (Expository Preaching Explained & Defended)

Introduction

Satan hates the powerful, authoritative Spirit empowered preaching of the Word of God because it glorifies God, depopulates his kingdom of darkness, and reminds him of his future eternal damnation. *Our sin nature* hates the preaching of the Bible because it is living and powerful, it exposes our many sins and is sharper than any two edged sword, it pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit and the joints and marrow, and judges our thoughts and the intents of our heart (cf. Heb. 4:12-13). This godless *world* hates the preaching of the Word of God because it condemns the whole world as guilty before a holy God (Rom. 3:19). The preaching of God's Word evaluates all of the wisdom of this hell bound world as foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18-19). The whole world stands arrayed in opposition to the preaching of God's Word (Psa. 2:2; John 15:18).

In their opposition to the preaching of the word of God they have taken numerous approaches to silence the messengers of God. One approach is to persecute or kill the messenger. Jesus asked which of the prophets they have not persecuted (Matt. 21:35). All throughout history, God's true preachers of the Word have experienced persecution, even to the point of death. Paul was beheaded, Peter was crucified upside down, Wycliffe was burned at the stake. In America, the enemy of man's soul has used numerous effective approaches. One approach to destroy the preaching of the Bible is to undermine the inspiration of the Bible. In the end of the 1800's and into the early 1900's, Satan introduced three philosophies which have destroyed the mainline denominations. His three deadly lies were evolution, psychology and German higher criticism.

Evolution claimed the Bible could not possibly be literally true since it says God created man while science taught that man evolved through millions of minute biological mutations. Psychology "proved" that man could live a happy, meaningful life without the need for the mean of grace. Higher criticism was the integration of the first two theories into the Bible. After all, they reasoned, if man is simply the product of mindless, random chance and if man can find inner peace without God, than what is the Bible all about? Their answer was that the Bible was nothing more than a collection of campfire stories reflecting the thoughts of these evolved apes about life and death.

The impact in the mainline denominations is now a matter of historical fact. Just as the Bible believing Christians had foretold, the mainline denominations began to hemorrhage, losing millions of member. Preaching the Bible was replaced with speeches on social issues. Evangelism was replaced with social action. Bible morality was replaced with the "new morality". Sin and heresy became rampant to the point that now these denominations are ordaining sodomites to pastor their churches. Satan's ministers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:15) are now solidly in control of those apostate churches.

The Seeker Church Movement

Satan then introduced a new method to undermine the authoritative preaching of the Word of God. This time he took a different and novel approach which is currently destroying the evangelical church in America. It is called "the seeker church movement". The Charismatic movement helped to lay the foundation for the seeker movement by infiltrating many evangelical churches and bringing on emphasis on mysticism and experientialism. The preaching of the Word of God was not central in those Charismatic churches. In place of the solid exegesis of the Bible, people began recounting their visions, dreams, "tongues" and prophecies. Healing lines and the endless repetition of mantra-like choruses crowded out the solid, clear, authoritative, verse-by-verse exposition of the truth of God's Word.

"Evangelicals" have been conditioned to minimize the proclamation of the Bible and came to expect instead entertaining music, humorous dramas and psychologically oriented "felt need" messages. The time was ripe for the new, *far more deadly methodology* of Satan called by various names such as: the "seeker church movement", "marketing the church", "the purpose driven church", "seeker driven", "seeker sensitive", and so forth. This "user-friendly church" movement is far more deadly than liberalism or any cult because it pretends to be one of us. It is an attack from within. It is a wolf in sheep's clothing. It is important to note that while there may be a spectrum of involvement by various churches in this movement the flagship churches (Schuller, Warren, Hybels, Joel Osteen, etc.) all hold the same basic, fundamental false theories of church growth. Younger pastors who enter this movement find themselves drawn further and further down the slippery slope, or as Spurgeon called it, "The downgrade controversy". All lead away from biblical exegesis, preaching sound doctrine, preaching all the attributes of God and so forth.

Liberalism argued that pastors should not preach the Bible because it simply is not literally true. At best it is like an Aesop's fable – a memorable story with a moral point to it. Enlightened scientific minded people would not attend a church which preaches "blood" atonement or a literal burning hell. Liberals instead gave messages on social action issues. The Charismatic movement undermined the Bible among Christians by putting dreams, visions, "word of knowledge" and prophecies alongside of the Bible. These fantasies soon took priority over the Bible. After all, who would not put a "personal word from God" (a "rhema" word) ahead of the "letter" of the Bible?

With evangelicals conditioned to ignore Bible exposition on Sunday mornings the way was cleared for the seeker movement. Not only is Bible exposition (i.e. biblical preaching) neglected, but it is actually seen as a hindrance in attempting to reach "seekers". Rick Warren of "Purpose Driven" fame writes, "I do not believe verse-by-verse teaching through books of the bible is the most effective way to evangelize the unchurched" (*The Purpose Driven Church*, 294). Warren and other preachers who have sold out to the marketing model of preaching argue that "You cannot start with a text [of scripture], expecting the unchurched to be fascinated by it. You must first capture their attention. . . By starting with a topic that interests the unchurched. . ." (Ibid, 295).

Those who seek to market the church instead of preaching the Word (because you cannot do both) actually have the audacity to claim that *certain truths of God's Word are not being taught to the unsaved!* They seem to have the "mystical" ability to identify which of God's precious truths we are to share and which are to be hidden. Warren says,

"While all Scripture is equally inspired by God, it is not equally applicable to unbelievers. Some passages are clearly more appropriate for seeker services than others. For instance, you probably won't want to read David's prayer in Psalm 58: 'Break the teeth in their mouths, O God. . . Like a slug melting away as it moves along, like a stillborn child, may they not see the sun . . . The righteous will be glad . . . when they bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.' Save this passage for your own personal quiet time or the local pastor's breakfasts!" (Ibid, 297-298).

Psalm 58

However, contrary to Warren's unbiblical theory that preachers should hide certain truths such as God's judgment from the "seeker of truth" (?) This particular Psalm is an especially important one for them to learn. Psalm 58 is a Psalm speaking of the righteous judgment of God upon the wicked. Verses one and two unmask the hypocrisy of the wicked. They claim to be speaking the truth but in reality they work wickedness in their heart. This truth is important for the wicked to understand so that they can see the God sees through all their hypocritical self-righteousness. This should lead them to true repentance. Verses three through five show the wicked that God declares that they have been born in sin. Their depravity is genetic. God also reveals to the "seeker" that he is stubborn and rebellious and in his own self will he refuses to turn and be saved. Verses six through eleven pronounce God's righteous judgment on the unrepentant wicked.

God's judgment is righteous because the "seeker" has stubbornly refused to listen to the charming call of the gospel. The wicked are subjects of God's living and burning wrath because they deserve to be! God sought them and they refused to return to him with their whole heart. This passage is also a very important encouragement to the righteous (vv. 10-11). We can rejoice in knowing that the wicked will be judged eventually, even if they seem to get away with it for now. Why does Warren, and others like him in his "market drive" movement, want to hide these life saving truths from those headed for an eternity in hell? God certainly did not hide them. They are in the Bible for anyone to read plainly. His messengers must do the same.

The Kayrux

What is a preacher supposed to preach? What must be the content of his sermons? And in *what manner* is he supposed to preach it? In the Greek world of Bible days, the kings (Caesar) did not have TV, radio, mass mailings, or the internet. How did they get their message across to the multitudes? They employed a person called a "kayrux" (κήρυξ, a herald). The herald was a highly valued government

position that carried with it huge responsibility. The *kayrux* was responsible for one simple thing – to receive a written message from the king and deliver it verbally – and exactly. Contests were held to select the most qualified men to become official heralds. The herald had to have a loud, strong voice with good clear diction. But even more important, the herald had to deliver *every single word exactly* as entrusted to him. The *kayrux* had ABSOLUTELY NO FREEDOM to alter the message, soften the message, add to the message or delete from the message. Any deviation from the exact message of the king would be treason!

What should people expect from a sermon when they come to church? That can be confusing when we examine what is presently being put forward as “preaching” in so many churches today. Here are some probing questions modern Christians should ask about the preaching they listen to:

- Is preaching supposed to make you feel good? Should it avoid dealing with your specific sins?
- Is preaching supposed to be based on psychologically determined felt needs?
- Is preaching supposed to be a commentary on the latest news?
- Is preaching supposed to be a philosophical discourse?
- Is preaching supposed to be a “relevant” series showing us how to meet our felt needs?
- Is preaching supposed to avoid the “distasteful” attributes of God like justice, wrath, hell, condemnation, judgment, rebuke, reproof, warning, holiness, the sovereignty of God?
- Is preaching supposed to draw large crowds?
- Is preaching supposed to be “fun”, “short”, and “inoffensive”?

If you answered “yes” to any of the above, you have been deceived. All of the above is man’s wisdom. The wisdom of this world is earthly, sensual and demonic (Jas. 3:15).

God’s Message – Every Word!

The Bible reveals that preaching is supposed to be the authoritative, Spirit empowered delivery of God’s full message to the people. God’s message always includes both promises of blessing and threats of cursing. It’s just that simple. The Bible is God’s message and the only way to preach the Bible in such a way as to be certain to proclaim all of its truth is to take it book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse. As the prophet said, “Line upon line, precept upon precept” (Isa. 28:10-13). The preacher is commanded to proclaim the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:20, 27) not simply to tell people the parts they want to hear or that make them feel comfortable (Isa. 30:10). God’s message of repentance (Acts 2:38) always makes us feel uncomfortable (Acts 7:54-59).

The ministry of the Holy Spirit called “conviction” means that when the Bible (God’s message) is preached under the power of the Spirit, the Spirit makes people feel guilty and ashamed of their sin (John 16:8). Does your preacher make you feel guilty and ashamed of your sin? If not, then you can be sure *he is not preaching under the filling of the Holy Spirit*. Be sure, preaching that consistently makes you “feel good” is not biblical. The text (not the preacher) should determine both the topic and the tone of the sermon. Only in expository Bible preaching does the Bible determine the text for the week. The main point of the text becomes the main point of the sermon. The supporting points in the text become the supporting points in the sermon.

Old Testament Roots

Enoch

One of the first preachers we read of in the Bible is Enoch. What did Enoch preach? Was Enoch a preacher of felt needs? Did Enoch do all he could to avoid offending "seekers"? Well, let's read his sermon;

"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him'"
(Jude 14-15)

Clearly, Enoch was not a people pleaser, he was a God pleaser. He walked with God and God took him. Who's preaching should a preacher imitate – Enoch or Warren, Schuller and Hybels? Sadly, many young pastors are bewitched by the overwhelming response the seeker movement seems to gather. They compare their meager handful against the tens of thousands attending seeker churches and they wonder what is wrong with them? The temptation for a young pastor who is not solidly grounded in Bible exegesis is more than hundreds of thousands of them can handle.

Noah

Noah preached the Word of God to a hostile world and yet he did not compromise the message in order to get a hearing. The Bible calls Noah a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). Noah preached the same righteous standards and judgments of God as all the other preachers in the Bible. He clearly preached to the wicked world of his day that there is a God in heaven who holds men accountable for the sins of their life (Heb. 4:13). He preached the coming destruction of the world by flood and the eternal damnation of all those wicked people who refused to repent, turn away from their sinful ways, and follow the true God (Gen 6:9-11). God gave him a message and he boldly proclaimed every word of it.

What was the fruit of his preaching? The people stayed away in droves! Out of the millions, only eight souls went with him in the ark! Yet he was not a failure, but rather a huge success because he faithfully discharged his God given duty of proclaiming the message God gave him (1 Cr. 4:2). Some seeker preachers have even suggested that if Noah had known and employed the principles of modern church growth theory and if he had marketed the church and used a felt need approach to his preaching, he would have had tens of thousands of people pressing to get into the ark. Hmmm.

Some modern preachers fear men more than God and so they do not preach the righteousness God commands. Sin, repentance, guilt, conviction and holiness are absent from the sermons of the ministers of Satan (2 Cor. 11:13-15). One sure sign that a preacher is a minister of the enemy is how much they delete the great doctrines of sin, hell, judgment, God's holiness, wrath, and sovereignty. They even advertise that their sermons are fun, light, never mention the "H" word (Hell), never bring condemnation or guilt and always leave you comfortable and laughing. These false prophets will answer to God one day (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

Ezekiel

It may be true that if a preacher eliminates the high commitment of true Christianity, does not mention the hard demands and cost of salvation, and puts on a good show, he may attract larger crowds. But is this pleasing to God? Hardly. Is this success? In the world's eyes large attendance and large offerings are the marks of success, but not to God. God defines success as faithfully discharging His command. God told the preacher Ezekiel,

"Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. For they are impudent and stubborn children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD God,' as for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse – for they are a rebellious house – yet they will know that a prophet has been among them" (Ezek. 2:3-5).

The response of the people is not and must not be a factor in our preaching or their response will quickly influence and contaminate our preaching. The message will soon become diluted, as it is in the "seeker sensitive", "user-friendly", "market driven" style churches.

Josiah & Nehemiah

It is crucial to understand why Bible believing churches must put such a huge emphasis upon preaching God's word, verse-by-verse, with the people following along with Bible in hand. In the days of the kings, the Bible had become so neglected that idolatry and immorality were rampant even among God's chosen people. *As it is in our day.* When preachers neglect the Bible and replace it with psychology, "felt needs", philosophy, politics, "get rich with Jesus" theology, personal anecdotes and an inordinate amount of humor the result will be false gods, sinful living and national moral decay. In addition, those who receive a steady diet of such public speaking will become more and more *intolerant of biblical preaching.*

Those who are fed a steady diet of "user-friendly" sermons and feel good messages become inoculated against true Bible preaching. A church member who has been fed a diet of "felt need" topical, feel good messages for some years will perceive biblical exposition as legalistic and judgmental. A Bible preacher will constantly preach against sin, and he will preach obedience out of a heart of love for God. The Bible says, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but *keeping the commandments of God is what matters*" (1 Cor. 7:19). Again, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but *faith working through love*" (Gal. 5:6). Those coddled in feel good messages are highly offended that a preacher would preach obedience to the commands of God as the mark of a true Christian (1 John 2:3-4).

Preachers who have an eye on how their message affects attendance will compromise, and their audience will suffer eternally. Modern preachers are having the same effect on their congregation that a generation of "Dr. Spock parents" had on their children. They raised a generation of selfish, godless, undisciplined, immoral rebels. Those who followed the wicked counsel of Dr. Spock destroyed their kids, and our society. Preachers who follow the unbiblical example of false prophets cultivate a crop of useless, false, deceived pseudo-Christians. Only when Josiah found the book of the Law in the Temple and began having all of it expounded to the people was there a great revival (cf. 2 Kings 22-23).

We see the same thing take place in the days of Nehemiah. The first order of business was for Ezra the priest to read the word clearly to the common people, help them to understand what it meant and then show them how to obey it (cf. Neh. 8:7-12). *Obedience from the heart is the only thing that brings blessing* (Deut. 28:1-14). Large crowds of people attending religious services are absolutely irrelevant if those people are not obedient from the heart to the laws of God. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord (cf. Heb. 12:14).

The Prophets

In the Old Testament days the role of the prophet was very clear. They were to hear a word from God and then simply repeat that word from God to the people (Ezek. 3:17). They were not to add or take away a single word from that message. The prophet first took the scroll and ate it and only then was he to proclaim the message. To reject the prophet was to reject the mouthpiece of God. So too the Bible preacher is to be a mere mouthpiece for God. The prophet did not have the right or the luxury of selectively preaching only the parts of the message which appealed to the hearers (Jer. 6:14).

Isaiah preached, "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the Law of the LORD" (Isa. 30:9) as well as, "Comfort, yes, comfort my people" (Isa. 40:1). The prophet's message ALWAYS included blessings as well as cursings. There was always the "reprove, rebuke and warn" (2 Tim. 4:2) along with the comfort and encouragement. The whole book of Isaiah is in two parts:

- "Comfort, yes, comfort my people!" (Isa. 40:1) as well as,
- "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores" (Isa. 1:5-6).

But modern evangelicals do not want to hear the whole Bible preached,

"To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the LORD is reproach to them; they have no delight in it" (Jer. 6:10).

The prophetic ministry had two aspects. One was "*foretelling*," in other words, to foretell the future. Daniel, for example, foretold the coming of the great world empires and how they would be destroyed by the future kingdom of God (Dan. 7). Another aspect of prophecy was "*forth-telling*." This was when the prophet retold the message that God had given. When other prophets retold the prophecies of former prophets they were not coming up with new messages but simply retold the former prophet's messages. They told forth the message from God. Those prophets were bound to the full content of the prophet's message. Line upon line, precept upon precept.

New Testament Model

Jesus' Example

How would Jesus preach to "seekers" and to your congregation? This answer is discovered by looking at how He preached throughout the New Testament. He was fully in line with the prophetic

tradition. He himself was "the Prophet" (John 6:14). Notice especially the message of the Lord to the seven churches of Revelation (Rev. 2 & 3). Those churches were steeped in sin. He boldly confronted the sins, commanded repentance and warned of judgment for those who refused to repent. Jesus exposed sin and laid the blame at the door of the sinner. Does your preacher do that? Those who repented, He gently and graciously forgave and warned to "go and sin no more" (John 8:1-11). Jesus followed the prophetic example and preached both, "Woe to you...hypocrites" (Matt. 23:13) and "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

What could you expect to hear from Jesus' sermons? Expect to have your sins exposed, to be warned to repent and then expect to have the offer of free forgiveness extended to you and a hearty welcome if you repent. *There is absolutely no difference in the preaching of Jesus and the prophets!* And there should be absolutely no difference between the preaching of the prophets and your preacher. How radically different that is from modern liberal, neo-evangelical and "seeker" type preachers. Many of them are even ashamed to be called preachers and call themselves "communicators." Many of them whittle down the Bible message to a neat and tidy 18 minutes in order to make room for psychological dramas about some baby boomer with "issues" sitting in the psychotherapist's office bemoaning how cold their father was! When did Jesus ever blame a sinner's rebellion on an unloving dad? Those who preach many good truths (like grace, God's love and mercy) but leave out many other truths (like sin, repentance, holiness, and judgment) are guilty of misrepresenting God and misleading the people who hear them.

Peter's Example

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter boldly expounded the Scriptures. He accused the hearers of being murderers of the Prince of Life (Acts 2:23). He fearlessly preached Jesus as the only way to heaven and that those who come to Him must turn from the perverted lifestyle of this godless world. Repentance from sin and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ were the heart of his message. The whole book of second Peter is a relentless attack on false prophets like the ones we see in evangelical pulpits of our day. Peter, unlike modern "public speakers" in many "churches" reproved, rebuked, warned and exposed sin (2 Tim. 4:2).

Paul's Example

Paul the apostle was a church planter. Wherever he went he proclaimed the same message as Jesus and the Old Testament prophets – Repent! Blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. He declared the whole counsel of God. He left nothing out. He reminds the church of Ephesus how he had gone preaching from house to house and that he left out nothing that God told him to preach. He warned of coming wrath, and commanded repentance and faith (cf. Acts 20:20-21). In the New Testament when the Gospels and Epistles were written they were widely circulated. They are the message of God as equally as the Old Testament books are. They are "Scripture" and *all* Scripture is given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16). For example, when the Apostle John wrote the book of Revelation he exercised the gift of prophecy in "foretelling" the future of the world. When his book is preached the preacher exercises the gift of prophecy in the aspect of "forth-telling" the Word of God. The pastor's message is not new, but is simply a retelling of John's prophecy.

What Has Gone Wrong?

Dark Ages

During the dark ages the world fell into spiritual blindness when the Roman Catholic church stole the Bible out of the hands of the common person and put it into Latin, the language of the scholar. The ordinary person became biblically illiterate. The result was that the church invented many new and bizarre teachings such as monks, priests, nuns, rosaries, confessionals, purgatory, limbo, prayers to saints, the treasury of merits, popes, cardinals, the magisterium and many other such man made teachings and doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1). The average person could not read the Bible and so had no ground from which to challenge the false teachings of the religion of their day. Additionally, the church had seized the secular government of the day and used the military might to murder those who disagreed with the Church of Rome.

Slipping Attendance

In our country, preachers often do not understand that the Bible foretells of widespread apostasy. Many will depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Pet. 2:1-22; Jude). *Slipping attendance is nothing more than fulfilled prophecy*, so why are we shocked? They may even have the noble motive of seeing more people in church. They look around at public speakers like Robert Schuller and others who have large crowds and they imitate their "preaching" style and content. They have not been trained to preach expositionally or they have abandoned their training.

Their primary concern is "bodies, bucks and buildings" and if a certain message and method of "preaching" increases their popularity they quickly become pragmatic. What works? By that they mean, what brings in the people and dollars. They should be asking, "What pleases God?" (1 Thess. 2:4) rather than, "What pleases men?" The sad thing is that when confronted with their error they are so blinded by their "success" that they cannot grasp the fact that they are denying the Lord who bought them. While living in sin, tolerating sin in their churches and diluting the pure message of the gospel according to Jesus they are firmly convinced that they are doing God's will and that He is pleased with them because they have a large number of people showing up in their church building. It is the spirit of the age – that a person can be "spiritual" without being holy. But a person cannot be right with God and blessed by Him while living in sin!

Reformation Preaching

As a Roman Catholic, Martin Luther was biblically illiterate. In his search to find release from his guilt he began to read the Bible as an unsaved Roman Catholic monk. Seeking spiritual answers he discovered what all of us discover, that the Bible is substantially different than the teaching of our manmade religions. He was shocked but overjoyed and turned in faith alone to Christ alone as his Savior. He found salvation was a FREE gift received by faith alone, not as the result of following a merit system of good works and sacraments.

When the Bible was then mass copied on the printing press and the people began to read the "banned" book thousands of them left the darkness of manmade religion and rejoiced in the light of God's Word. This began the Reformation. *The Bible, when read, studied and preached fully brings revival.* Oh God, rend the heavens and send a revival! The prompt response of the reformation

preachers was to give the Bible its due priority in the church. The pastor's job was again understood as a preacher of the Word, a prophet – not a mediatorial "priest". He was not a "priest" in the Roman religion's sense of standing as a mediator between men and God. From a study of the Bible the people learned that all true believers are priests with direct access to God (Rev. 5:10). The pastor's role was restored to that given in the Bible of being a prophet who proclaimed clearly and boldly the message from God. The communion table was removed from being in the center of the worship and the preaching pulpit was positioned at center stage. The architecture of the reformers reflected their theology. Preaching the Bible must be primary!

The church returned to the great tradition of mightily defending, expounding, explaining and applying the Bible to the lives of the listeners. In the days of Jonathan Edwards three and four hour long sermons were normal. With the return of the Bible to the layman there arose the great Bible conferences where one sermon was preached after another all day and into the night for a week or longer. Bible colleges, Bible studies and Bible preaching churches arose, blessing this country.

Why the Departure Today?

In the last generation or two there has been a great falling away in the American evangelical churches from the biblical practices of Bible preaching and Bible study. The Bible is seldom opened in the pulpit nor do people bring their own well read, deeply studied Bible to study along as the pastor explains God's Holy Word verse-be-verse, chapter-be-chapter and book-by-book. Many preachers have abandoned biblical exegesis in an effort to make their preaching "relevant" to "seekers." Seminaries even make the original languages optional for those going into pulpit ministry. This is a dangerous practice! Some pastors actually do not even use the Bible in their "public speaking!" Modern sermons are no longer based on and derived from the Bible. Instead, market driven church philosophy admonishes pastors to get their sermon topics and content from the self-help section of the local secular book store!

Their argument, like that of popular mega-church pastor Bill Hybels, is that the Bible is an "obstacle" to "seekers" and it must be shown to be relevant before it is used as the source of the sermon. They argue, like another popular mega-church pastor Rick Warren, that when they preach expositively and quote Bible verses or ask people to follow along in the Bible that the "seeker" gets "turned off" and their churches don't grow. As a result they preach pop psychology and self-help topics and take on a Bible verse as a proof text. Warren calls this "verse-with-verse" exposition. In reality it is nothing but proof texting felt need, psychological topics. Warren, for example commonly uses highly questionable "translations" like *The Message* or whatever translation supports his point for that moment. They say to the unsaved seeker, "See, you already know this truth. You heard it from your psychologist. You read about it in the latest best seller and heard about it on the Oprah show. It fits your human reason and, the Bible supports it!" In reality, the Bible supports very little of what people call psychology, felt needs, New Ageism or self-help.

Self-help, psychology, felt needs and so forth – these are the makings of modern preaching, but they cannot give life. Jesus said that the Scripture is what testifies of Him (cf. John 5:39). He is the life. The Bible, not psychology, is the light to our feet and the lamp to our path (cf. Psa. 119:105). Only God's Word saves souls and edifies Christians. The Word of God **MUST** be the **ONLY** thing that a preacher preaches because it alone is the "word of truth" that give us the new birth (cf. James 1:18), and anything else will only grow a crop of weeds (tares) – apostates. Look around! Look at the

"user-friendly" churches! Interview their attendees. You will find, as I have, that they are generally biblically illiterate, living unholy lives and apathetic toward the Great Commission, personal devotions, discipleship and prayer. Preachers who preach "feel good" sermons may attract a crowd, *but they are cultivating apostasy*. Their corrupt fruit is now beginning to drop from the tree and multiply. In the not too distant future, if the "no-lordship" theology and "no-expository preaching" of the seeker churches takes root, American churches will be dead. Hear me clearly! Mark my words! The seeker church movement is more dangerous than evolution or German higher criticism combined!

What about the fruit of genuine conversions coming from seeker churches? God is able to use Balaam's donkey. The fact that some people genuinely get saved under Benny Hinn's preaching does not make him a true prophet of God.

An Appeal to Preachers

Preacher, you are commanded to "Preach the Word!" (κήρυξον τὸν λόγον- kayruxon ton logon, 2 Tim. 4:2). *You will be held accountable on Judgment Day before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom for prophesying smoother things than God would allow (cf. Isaiah 30:10; Isa. 58:1)*. The time has come that people will no longer stand for sound doctrinal preaching and, you are playing into the devil's hands when you abandon the whole Bible for comfortable sermons. Who is your role model for preaching? A big name preacher with a building full of pseudo-Christians? Or is it the God blessed mighty men of God like Noah, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, Ezekiel, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles?

Do not take this warning from God lightly. I challenge you to do a biblical study of all of the preachers in the Bible. Look at the men of God in Israel under the kings. Examine the sermons of the prophets, Christ and the Apostles and then model your sermons after them, not after today's arena type church false prophets. Ask yourself seriously:

- Are the sins of your listeners addressed and rebuked in your pulpit (Isa. 58:1)?
- Are your hearers fed a steady diet of verse-by-verse exposition from the Bible?
- Do you preach consistently a balance of the whole counsel of God?
- How do you plan your preaching calendar?
- How do you select the topics you are going to preach?
- Do you follow the perverse method of surveying your congregation to see if they like your preaching?
- Are you asking them what they *want* to hear and what their "felt needs" are?
- Do you avoid preaching on offensive passages and doctrines?
- Do you take books of the Bible and work through them week after week and let God speak to your congregation what He wants them to hear?
- Furthermore, do you hold the people accountable to obey what you preach from the Bible?
- Do you practice church discipline on the willfully and unrepentantly disobedient (Matt. 18)?

My friend, I say this out of concern for your soul because you and I will receive the stricter judgment as teachers (James 3:1). If you are an "arena church" pastor you have an even greater responsibility because young Christians and young pastors tend to look to you as a role model. It would be better for you to have a millstone tied around your neck than to offend one of these little

ones. You are setting an example whether you like it or not. Be sure that you are setting an example with which God is pleased.

A Word to Church Members

Christian, I want to address you for a moment. Never, ever rebuke your pastor for preaching the Bible. *You are a wicked and bitter person in deep need of repentance if you cannot stomach the consistent, expository preaching of the Bible.* How dare you stone God's prophets! How dare you pressure your pastor to stop preaching on: hell, the wrath of God, the specific sins of the nation, state, city, church or people in the congregation, the righteousness of God, the holiness of God and the certainty of the coming day of Judgment!

Would you rebuke Jeremiah for preaching his God given message of the coming captivity as judgment of God? If your preacher is doing the hard exegetical work in his study to discover God's message for you, and if he is faithfully preaching the Bible, including the hard parts, especially the parts you do not want to hear, then he is God's messenger. Would you dare sit Noah down and tell him to stop being so negative, preaching against the sins of his neighbors and the destruction of the whole world by a flood? Would you demand that Noah tone down his preaching and start preaching on people's felt needs? Would you presume to tell Jonah that he could get a better response from the Ninevites by a positive, upbeat message and a psychologically oriented drama? Christian, if you have hindered your pastor's work and message by pressuring him, either through words, money or threats of leaving his church, to stop preaching the whole counsel of God, you should be deeply ashamed of yourself (Jer. 3:3). You have been pressed into the world's mold and need to be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:1). Go to him in repentance. Seek his forgiveness and ask him to pray to God that the judgment of God does not fall on you.

If you are a true Christian, you need to encourage your pastor if he is preaching the whole Bible – preaching *against sin* and preaching *for righteousness*. God commands true preachers to expose the sins of their listeners, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell me people their transgression" (Isa. 58:1). Pray for your pastor that God would strengthen him to continue to preach God's Word against the wicked sins of this godless, hell bound world. He must also preach against the sins of his congregation. Defend him against the attacks of the rebels. Hold his arms up in the battle!