

The Baptist Examiner

An independent paper, standing foursquare for the distinguishing doctrines of Baptists,
and shunning not to declare all the counsel of God.

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

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Some Characteristics of Jesus As A Preacher

By THE EDITOR

Jesus was the greatest preacher of all time. He is God's perfect pattern for preachers. The gospels are the greatest books ever written on how to preach. There is great need today that preachers make a fresh study of Jesus as a preacher. But not only do preachers need to study him; churches need this study also. Churches need to be acquainted with God's standard of preaching so that they will indorse and support a faithful ministry. Let us note the following characteristics of Jesus as a preacher:

1. He did not have the inordinate desire for numbers that some preachers and churches have today.

On many occasions great multitudes followed Jesus. But he was not thereby flattered into petting and pampering the multitudes so as to win them as his disciples. Rather he was wont in the presence of the multitudes to lay down the severest tests of discipleship and to utter the most scathing denunciations of sin. Some signal instances in point here are to be found in John 6:22-71; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 12:1-53; Luke 14:25-35. Christ sought after quality rather than quantity. He continually magnified the sterner side of discipleship and thus sloughed off the fickle multitudes. What a comparatively few of the great multitudes ever became actual disciples! A Billy Sunday would have had all of Palestine "hitting the saw-dust trail" and many a Baptist preacher would have had multiplied thousands of professions to report. Judged by modern standards, Jesus was a colossal failure as an evangelist!

Baptist churches today are overwhelmed by the unregenerate principally because we, unlike Christ, have had an inordinate desire for numbers. It is right to have a passion for the lost. Jesus had it to an infinite degree. But it is a sad mistake to allow our zeal to make us try to take the place of the Holy Spirit in the saving of souls. For the most part this inordinate desire for numbers has worn the cloak of a sincere and commendable, but misguided, evangelistic zeal. Nevertheless it has been tragical in its results. It has brought Baptist churches to where most of them have about as little regard for a preacher that will declare the whole counsel of God as the Pharisees had for Christ. It has practically obliterated the line of demarkation between the church and the world. B. H. Hillard once said: "The blighting curse has been, and still is, that Baptists have gone into a mad race for members until there are thousands swept into our churches with no more religion than a heathen Hottentot. This is no pessimistic 'whine,' but a tragic fact. Tell me that a saved man can have absolutely no concern for the cause of Christ? Tell me that a saved man will spend his entire earnings on himself and his and absolutely forget the cause of the Lord? Tell me that a saved man will desecrate the holy Sabbath day without the slightest restraint? Tell me that a saved man will habitually indulge in every form of worldly and sinful amusement—especially when his church stands against it? Tell me that a saved man will close his heart to the appeal of sin-cursed and dying humanity, in the face of the plain scriptural command—the last words of our Lord? I don't believe a word of it. Jesus said: 'By their fruits ye shall

know them.' That is enough. It tells a sad story. It will condemn men in hell unless the grace of God intervenes."

Estimates of the lost in our churches today range from fifty to seventy-five per cent. Of course, no one knows the exact per cent. But surely he is blind who cannot see that it must be represented, so far as man can tell, by quite a large figure.

Whence came this uncircumcised throng? Did God add them to our churches? Nay, not so. God adds to the church only such as are saved. Then, whence came they? We may trace their presence to at least two underlying causes:

(1) Forgetfulness that results belong to God. 1 Cor. 3:6. It is not ours to be primarily concerned about results. Rather we would have all concern about being obedient servants of God and leave results wholly with him. Especially do we need to be warned in this connection in this day when the commercial world is stressing results as never before. Efficiency of production is the great end sought today in the commercial world. This is the spirit of the age in which we live, and that spirit is as catching as smallpox. And a devout, open-minded study of the word is the only vaccine that will render us immune to it.

(2) An abuse of the annual protracted meeting and outside evangelism. Note that I bring no charge against these things in themselves. I speak only of their abuse. The preaching of the word is always in place, and when a church feels led to have a special period of preaching either to the saved or lost or both, it surely has scriptural warrant and precedent for doing so. And if a church and pastor feel led to call in an outside man to do the preaching, then they have scriptural precedent in the going of Barnabas to Tarsus in search of Paul to bring him back to Antioch to preach there in a protracted meeting. The evil has come in the abuse of these scriptural things. The wise solution of the problem lies not in their abolition, but in riding them of their evils. We have come to feel that we must have results during a protracted meeting. Commonly, if results in professions of faith do not begin to manifest themselves early in the meeting, then one expedient after another is used—"hot air", high pressure, radical emotionalism, long-winded invitations with many claptrap propositions and much begging. If the meeting goes on to a close and there are no "professions," everybody usually feels that the meeting has been a failure. In such a case the evangelist is not likely to get much money out of the meeting. And if he has many such meetings, it is very likely to put a check in his evangelistic career. In these ways we have come unconsciously to adopt false and unscriptural methods in evangelism. Oh when will we learn that it is ours to preach the word publicly, privately, in season and out of season, and then leave results with God. This leads us naturally to the next characteristic of Jesus that we desire to notice.

2. He depended wholly upon the word to accomplish results.

Jesus used but one method in evangelism! That one method was the preaching of the word. There are many things that

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