

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Silence of the Preachers

By Joe R. Price

Jeremiah was set in place by God to be his prophet to Jerusalem, Judah, and the nations. With God’s word, Jeremiah was set **“to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant”** (Jer. 1:4-5, 9-10). When he was severely persecuted for speaking God’s word to rebellious Jerusalem, Jeremiah pondered silence over speaking **“anymore in His name”** (Jer. 20:9). God’s prophet was tempted to refrain from speech sure to bring him under rejection, mockery, imprisonment, and death threats. He did not yield to the temptation. Instead, he was emboldened in faith to continue to open his mouth and speak the inspired word of God: **“But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not”** (Jer. 20:9). Although friends and foes were against him, he rested his confidence in the Lord’s presence, power, and justice (Jer. 20:10-12).

What a worthy example for every Christian today. We live in an age of moral defiance and open rebellion against God and His holy standards of conduct. Marriage is being redefined to include “same-sex” relationships. The murder of innocent life has been redefined to be a woman’s “right to choose” concerning “reproductive health,” while the unborn are relegated to being an appendage. Mind-altering substances like marijuana are being legalized, joining the ranks of alcohol and other drugs to vie for a way to “escape” reality. In religious circles, sin is being redefined out of existence and the Scriptures are ridiculed as mythical, outdated, and irrelevant. Faith has been reduced by some to a money grab as they preach prosperity theology that serves the flesh.

The question for us is whether we will raise our voices against the prevailing winds of sin and unbelief. Will we fear men and be silent? Will we quietly dissent but publicly go along with the evils of the day? Are we prepared to suffer for the name of Christ (1 Pet. 4:16)? What would Jeremiah say and do? (If you are familiar with the life of Jeremiah, you know the answer to that question.)

Jeremiah is a worthy example for gospel preachers to follow. Preachers have devoted their lives to proclaiming the word of God to a lost and dying world. They are obliged before God to “preach the gospel” without fear or favor (1 Cor. 9:16; 2 Tim. 4:2-4). They are to speak the whole counsel of God boldly, not avoid its proclamation (Acts 20:27). They are not to be hirelings who remain silent in the face sin, error, and spiritual danger (Jno. 10:12-13).

Too often we are left to wonder what a preacher teaches on the soul-affecting topics of the day. Jeremiah didn’t have that problem; people knew where he stood. A gospel preacher must stand against the tide of public opinion and unfaithfulness like Jeremiah. That is not only true of gospel preachers, but also of elders, teachers, and all who do the work of building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

Preachers are silent today when they ought to proclaim God’s word against sin in all its forms, including false teaching and immorality. No preacher (or elder) should ever be heard saying, “We don’t have that problem here,” or, “there’s no need to preach on that subject.” That is exactly what our adversary the devil wants – the silence of the preachers! Be assured fellow-preachers, if you are not preaching on subjects because they are not problems currently where you live, they will eventually arise and the brethren will be ill-equipped to address them from God’s word, due in part, to your silence (cf. Ezek. 3:16-19). Let me illustrate.

Bible authority and the local church. I have been told on more than one occasion that comprehensive teaching on how to establish and apply Bible authority is not being preached these days as in the past. Congregations are becoming ill-prepared to deal with innovations that are creeping into local churches. We now see “non-

institutional” churches of Christ advertising the social activities of members, from picnics to youth “lock-ins.” By what Bible authority does a church advertise and promote recreational activities? Some churches of Christ announce youth camps operated by colleges and individuals. Where are the preachers rising up to warn brethren against violations of Bible authority by adding a social work to the spiritual labors of the local church (Col. 3:17)? Fellow-preacher, when was the last time you preached on Bible authority and the differences between the individual and the congregation (1 Tim. 5:16; Matt. 18:15-17)? The silence of the preachers is deafening!

Marriage, divorce and remarriage. That’s a topic from which many preachers run. When was the last time your preacher publicly preached on divorce and remarriage? There are preachers who will not do so. They reason like the world: “That is a subject for classes or private study, not the pulpit.” Perhaps Jeremiah should not have publicly preached against the adultery of the age (both actual and the spiritual adultery of idolatry, Jer. 3). At times I am asked what a certain preacher teaches on this subject, and I must rely, “I don’t know; he has nothing in writing or on record to go to and find out.” That should not be the report concerning one who preaches the gospel (Acts 20:20). Ask the man what he believes and preaches. (Some appear to think we cannot even ask what a preacher preaches without intruding on church autonomy.) Ask your preacher to preach on the subject. Silence enables the spread of doubt, sin, and compromise. To add insult to injury, when one does speak up and preach the truth on the subject he is branded a “radical,” a “troublemaker,” and an “extremist” unworthy of being heard (sort of like Jeremiah, Jer. 26; 37:11-21; 38:3-6). So, it is safer to be silent. The silence of the preachers is deafening!

Space fails to speak of the silence of the preachers on immodest clothing, social drinking, fellowship with error, and more. Jeremiah’s warning remains relevant: ***“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end”*** (Jer. 5:31)? Is your preacher being silent when he should preach (2 Tim. 4:2)? If so, ask him why. God’s word was like a fire burning in Jeremiah’s heart he could not contain; he had to preach. May it ever be so. – *Spirit’s Sword*, December 15, 2013. ■

CAN FAITH ONLY SAVE?

By John Edwards

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him” (Jas. 2:14).

FAITH WITHOUT LOVE WILL NOT PROFIT. ***“...though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing”*** (1 Cor. 13:2).

THE COWARDLY RULERS BELIEVED. ***“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God”*** (Jn. 12:42-43).

FAITH ALONE IS DEAD. ***“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”*** (Jas. 2:17). ***“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”*** (Jas. 2:20). ***“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”*** (Jas. 2:26).

THE DEVILS BELIEVED. ***“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble”*** (Jas. 2:19).

NOT JUSTIFIED BY FAITH ONLY. ***“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”*** (Jas. 2:24).

THE FAITH THAT AVAILS MUST WORK. ***“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love”*** (Gal. 5:6). – *The Terre Haute Speaker*, January 17, 2021. 21. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250