

A Naive Preacher

by Wane Goff

Unfortunately, I was once a very naive preacher. When I first began preaching I thought that all I had to do to help improve the spiritual lives and standing of my brethren was (1) Discover what sins or weaknesses they had; (2) Preach on them once, and (3) PRESTO! They would repent, do better, and we could go on to the next matter! (Oh brother.... was **I** naive!) Nobody told me that brethren sometimes could be **stubborn, obstinate, and unwilling to yield!**

So, *still being naive*, I decided that if brethren didn't change soon after they had been informed of their sin or weakness, then I would get up in the pulpit and "browbeat" them into submission! But in time and with the patience of men and brethren I learned **this** important lesson: *"Those convinced against their will are of the same opinion still."* You cannot **force** someone to believe the truth. You must try to **convince** them of the truth, or of their error, or of the need to do better. So I have spent the rest of my preaching life trying to make the truth as plain and palatable as possible. Some who have heard me preach may not think so, but with God as my witness, this is my desire. Even so, some things just **cannot** be easy to believe and accept.

Every preacher's **Divine Commission** is: *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:1-2)*. I can tell you that from experience, some brethren do not like the part about *"convince, rebuke, exhort"*! But when it is **needed**, it **must** be preached, and the preacher is commanded by God to do so.

It is a good lesson for all preachers, myself included, to consider Paul's words to the Thessalonians about his methods and motives for preaching. He said that he was *"bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict" (1 Thess. 2:2)*. Yet, while doing so, he said *"our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit" (2:3)*. His motive was to **please God** and not men (2:4). He did not use flattering words or speak *"words of covetousness" (2:5)*. He did not seek glory from men (2:6). *"But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children" (2:7)*. Personally, I have always had a bit of a time reconciling verse 7 with verse 2! How can one speak boldly and yet gently as a nursing mother cherishes her own children? I think the key may be the love with which the bold speaking is done. All the good brethren I have known will readily accept rebuke and chastisement if they believe the preacher has their best interest in mind. And sometimes the preacher can be mistaken — both in word and in application. So brethren, sympathize with the preacher's plight, and "search the Scriptures" to see if what he says is so.

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