

This Year's Preaching

If you are reading this article, you've made it to the New Year! This week, I thought I'd inflict upon you a personal note. As a preacher, I always begin a new year the same way: asking myself, "Are you doing your job?" As James points out, this is serious: "*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment*" (James 3:1). Keeping from offense and speaking the truth in love can be a constant concern, a treacherous treading of a tedious tight-rope. However, my faithful friend, Richard Massey, pointed out the dilemma we preachers face. Allow me to share.

"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

The good Lord knows that to preach against sin upsets some men. For example: preaching on liberal giving upsets the covetous man; speaking against the sin of homosexuality will aggravate sodomites; preaching on creation will frustrate evolutionists; condemning dancing (lasciviousness) and the consumption of alcoholic beverages displeases "socialites;" preaching on immodest dress will disgruntle the worldly minded; and reproving the practices of liberals will raise the ire of those leaning in that direction.

However, it is only through exposing sin that man will be brought to know his error and consequently repent. Man's salvation is contingent upon having his misconduct pointed out. Is it better for the preacher to never condemn sin (which leaves men lost) and have all men speak well of you – or, preach against sin, have some men hate you, and yet save those who are lost? The latter is what Jesus did.

The preacher has only one obligation – please God. He does this by preaching the word – the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27; 2 Tim. 4:1-5). When we do this, men will be saved from sin.

Amen! I'll be presenting the *Message of Matthew* throughout this year. Along with the building up (of right conduct), there will be some tearing down (of wrong conduct); along with edification (encouragement), a biblical balance must include reproof and rebuke (correction). Some sermons will be pleasant and make us feel better (I hope); some will be unpleasant and make us feel uncomfortable (I hope). May God bless this year's preaching with growth (1 Corinthians 3:6).