

Strong Preaching

In response to the urgency of modern preachers to be non-offensive, to be gracious, and to offend no one, I thought I would give some examples of how God also wanted to make His point without being too brash, blunt, or offensive.

There were some children (yes, children, those innocent, little things that we feel can do no wrong), only these children were making fun of the story of Elijah being taken up into Heaven. They added on comments about the bald head of Elisha. Of course, God understood their ethnic, social, and economic background, and due to their educational and family history, God acted in the most delicate manner as a bear came out of the woods and tore them to shreds. (2 Kings 2:23)

1 Kings 18 tells the story of Elijah calling down fire from Heaven, then concludes this public, outdoor preaching service by chopping 450 prophets to pieces. That was subtle. (1 Kings 18:40)

Another time, God wanted to make a point about bad attitudes among leadership, so He had the earth open and swallow Korah and all his family and possessions (Numbers 16:32). God concluded His visual aid by sending fire from Heaven and to burn up the 250 men who had joined Korah in his rebellion. That was unobtrusive.

The action was a clear "sign" to the people of how God thinks and what God wants. His point was emphasized by the action following the sin. Numbers 26:10 "And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign."

Lot's wife is proof of the gentle and unassuming methods our Lord uses when dealing with things of which He is not pleased. It was the subtle communication methods of God that made Sodom an "ensample" to those who would live ungodly in the future (2 Peter 2:6).

God made a BIG deal about wrong situations! People did not like it most of the time. Take the story of David bringing the Ark back to Jerusalem. (2 Samuel 6) Uzzah simply touched the ark. He was right where he was told to be, doing what he was told to do, yet God killed him, and David was very unhappy because of this situation. The people were very unhappy with Moses in the prior story about Korah. Pleasing the people is not the first priority in the ministry.

When Nadab and Abihu offered the wrong incense before the Lord (Leviticus 10), God did not give a gracious reminder, but rather a clear message was sent to all priests by their death. It was so dramatic that God would not even allow their relatives to attend a funeral.

Let us be honest; God makes His point very clear when He wants to. We want to fix situations without displaying any drama, without showing any visual examples of the

dangers of sin, or displeasing God. We have managed to bring up a generation without the fear of the Lord. Some things are right and some things are wrong; some things God will not allow to go on; some things God insists on being done His way. For example: God used a whale to get Jonah to obey and used a donkey to speak to its owner to correct him. After turning over tables of money owned by money changers, Jesus made a whip and drove animals out of the temple. Paul stood up in front of a large church dinner and corrected Peter for his wrong actions (Galatians 2:11). God killed a couple over the matter of lying about their giving (Acts 5). Who is guiding our preachers by telling them not to be offensive? No one gets stoned or crucified for being nice. Did Stephen simply chat about Old Testament stories? Is that why they dragged him out of town and killed him? Was it Paul's inoffensive evangelistic methods at Lystra that moved the people to drag him out of town, stone him, and leave him for dead?

Strength, courage, boldness, and blunt communication are not inappropriate, fleshly, or carnal; it is certainly not wrong to raise your voice a little to make a point. In fact, Isaiah says to lift up your voice like a trumpet, not a piccolo.

Just what part of "reprove, rebuke, and exhort" or "show my people their sins" is it that fits the easy-going, praise and worship Bible study ministry model? John the Baptist called people names like vipers and sent them away when they came to be baptized. Yet when people wondered who Jesus was, they thought He might be John the Baptist.

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