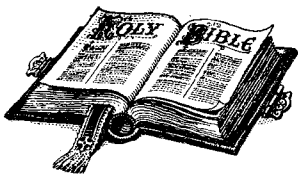


THE INSTRUCTOR



"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16.

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THE FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIAN

The disciples of Christ were given a name shortly after the gospel dispensation began. This name was revealed from heaven. (Acts 11:26). This name showed the relationship between the disciple and Christ and also suggested a pattern of life to be lived. The unchanging Christ requires in every 20th century person, in order to be counted faithful, a life which corresponds with the faithful first century Christian.

1. The Christians of the first century had been born again. Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5). Christians were in the kingdom, having been translated there by God. (Col. 1:13). Since they were in the kingdom they had all been born of water and of the Spirit. An example of this is recorded in Acts 2. That number who were pricked in their hearts, i.e., believed that Jesus was the Christ, were told to repent and be immersed (baptized) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. As many as gladly received these instructions were immersed in water and raised to the new life in Christ.

2. The Christian of the first century was persuaded to be a Christian. There was no irresistible, direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the person that, against his will, made him a Christian. Each person was taught of God and of their own will made the decision to be a Christian. Too, this was long before the development of false doctrines of

men and the development of denominations that are known in our day. These first century Christians were not persuaded to join their favorite denomination; they were only Christians and Christians only. Their identity with Christ was sufficient without holding membership in denominations, which would separate and divide. They remained united as one in Christ.

3. The Christian of the first century was not afraid to suffer. His faith was based upon Christ whom the world had put to death, and, therefore, expected no less for himself. Peter wrote, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Pet. 4:16). Paul once said, "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor. 4:11). There was no particular virtue in suffering, but there was virtue in remaining true to Jesus while being threatened because of a committed life.

4. The Christian of the first century manifested a holy life. The old man of sin was buried in baptism and a new man was raised up; a new man of holiness. The former ways of sin were forsaken and the new way of righteousness was accepted and lived, as it is written, "But thanks be to God, that whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became

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Editorial-----

"HE PREACHES TOO LONG"

Frequently, in criticism of some preacher, we hear some "Christian" declare: "**He preaches too long**" or "**He is a long-winded preacher.**" Have you ever made such a statement? Have you ever seriously considered the full import of such a statement? Let us carefully examine in the light of the Scriptures the commonly heard criticism: "**He preaches too long.**"

WHO OFFERS THIS CRITICISM?

The criticism that "he preaches too long" may be made by another preacher, an elder, a deacon, class teacher, song leader, or any member of the church. It may be said immediately following the dismissal of the assembly, on the way home, at work, in a business meeting, or elsewhere. The criticism may be voiced to one other person at a time or in a group. It may be offered calmly or in anger. It may be spoken in sincerity or in hypocrisy.

WHAT DOES THE PERSON MEAN?

When a person makes the charge that "**he preaches too long,**" just what does he mean? Does he mean that the preacher has in some way violated God's law? If so, in what way? Does he mean that the preacher has preached

too much truth on that occasion? Does he mean that the preacher has imposed on those present by trying to teach them the truth of God? Does he mean that the preacher has no concern for the feelings of those present and has "kept them" an unreasonable length of time? Does he mean that there are other things that are more important that people have been denied the opportunity of doing because of the length of the sermon? Does he mean he does not want to listen to God's Word that long? Or does he mean something else? Just what does the critic mean?

WHAT IS THE MOTIVE?

What is the motive of the critic who says "he preaches too long? Is it to edify the hearers? Is it to destroy the effectiveness of the lessons? Is it to destroy the preacher's influence for good? Is it to discourage brethren from using such a preacher? Is it to strengthen the critic and others by "shortening the sermons? Or is it something else? Just what is the real motive of those who say: "he preaches too long?"

EFFECT OF THE CRITICISM

What is the effect of such criticism? Is it good or bad? Does the criticism edify or discourage? Does it tend to strengthen or weaken one spiritually? Does it tend to promote or destroy peace and harmony among Christians? Does it help or hinder the cause of Christ? An honest answer to these questions might well help one determine whether it is right or wrong. The critic must account for making the charge! Consider Matthew 12:36-37.

REASONS FOR CRITICISMS GIVEN BY SOME

Why does the critic say that "**the lessons should be shorter?**" Here are the "reasons" that are sometimes given:

1. "**The attention span is short. I can't get anything out of the lesson after thirty minutes.**"

OBSERVATIONS: (1) No doubt, the attention span of many is short. In fact, some have no attention span when it comes to spiritual matters. As far as adults are concerned, we determine to a great extent how long our attention span is. (2) Educators know that a person must

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HE PREACHES TOO LONG

discipline himself and thus lengthen his attention span if he is to learn well any subject. (3) It depends upon one's interest as to whether he gets anything out of a lesson after thirty minutes.

2. **"If the service is very long, the children will disrupt because they get restless."**

OBSERVATIONS: (1) We have the responsibility of training our children to act properly and to develop a genuine interest in spiritual things. The example we set will greatly influence them. (2) Restless adults are more distracting than fidgety children.

3. **"We have other things to do after we get home."**

OBSERVATIONS: (1) Yes, but what? "Eat, drink, and be merry?" Is it to watch TV, visit relatives, go hunting, fishing, boating, golfing, to take a nap, etc.? (2) I have never known of any person who requested that the services be "shortened" so they could rush out to help the needy, visit the afflicted, or to teach their neighbors the gospel, etc.! **Have you!**

4. **"If the service is not over by noon, we can't beat the Baptists to Britling's!"**

OBSERVATIONS: (1) There are two solutions so this "problem." We can begin an hour or two earlier, or we can continue the worship until the Baptists have left Britling's. (2) Why does any Christian think that we should beat the Baptists to Britling's any way? (3) Read Luke 10: 38-42 and learn the lesson that Jesus taught. He said: **"But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her."**

THOUGHTS FROM OTHER SCRIPTURES

No doubt, periods of times for reading or preaching God's word varied on different occasions, but please consider the following passages:

1. NEHEMIAH 8:3 says: "And he **read** therein before the street that was before the water gate **from the morning** (from the light-Footnote) **until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.**"

2. NEHEMIAH 9:3 tells us that the Israelites **"stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God."**

3. ACTS 2 records a short sermon, but verse 40 says: "And with **many other words** did he testify and exhort saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

4. ACTS 2:46 says: "And they, **continuing daily with one accord in the temple, . . .**"

5. ACTS 15 tells us relative to the discussion of circumcision that "when there had been **much disputing**," Peter rose up and spoke. After that the multitude listened to Barnabas and Paul relate what God by them had wrought among the Gentiles. After they held their peace, James gave a discourse.

6. ACTS 20: 7-9 says: "And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul **preached** unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and **continued his speech until midnight. . . AND AS PAUL WAS LONG PREACHING**, he (Eutychus) sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead."

QUESTION: Would you accuse Paul of preaching too long?

PRINCIPLES IN OTHER SCRIPTURES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

1. 1 Cor. 15:58 says: "**. . . always abounding in the work of the Lord.**"

2. EPH. 5:16 says: "**Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.**"

3. COL. 3:2 says: "**Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**"

4. 1 PETER 2:2 says: "**As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.**"

5. MATTHEW 5:6 says: "**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**"

6. MATTHEW 6:33 says: **But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;.."**

Brethren, we should be very careful about charging one with **preaching too long** lest we foster an ungodly attitude that will affect us and many others.

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obedient from the heart to that from of teaching where-unto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.' (Rom. 6:17-18). Christians correctly viewed God as their Father and themselves from all defilements of flesh and spirit, and perfected holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 7:1).

5. The first century Christian went about doing good to all men, especially unto other Christians. (Gal. 6:10). Of primary concern was the salvation of his neighbor's soul, which was accomplished through teaching the gospel. He learned to look after the needy, and this was done with great tenderness. Every one was his neighbor. He shared his spiritual and material treasures with all as he had opportunity.

6. The first century Christian assembled with other Christians for spiritual fellowship in eating the Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week, at which time they also prayed together, sang hymns, psalms and spiritual songs, edified each other with the doctrine of Christ and contributed of their personal property into a common treasury which was then used to spread the gospel and to care for the needy among the Christians.

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THE HILL-SUTTON DEBATE

A new year has begun and we are still waiting for the "elders" of the West Hobbs St. church in Athens and **Albert Hill** to honor their agreement to re-schedule the HILL-SUTTON DEBATE. They promised it in a short time from the last of April, 1974. That's right.

Last month we **challenged** the "elders" to get someone to take **Albert Hill's** place if he is the reason they haven't re-scheduled the debate. However, as of now, we have not received any response whatsoever—except silence! It is still hard for me to accept the idea that the "elders" will not re-schedule the debate.

7. The first century Christian had his eyes on heaven. This world was not his home, he was, as a pilgrim, only passing through. He realized that one day he would die and then would face eternity with all earthly treasures left behind. With his eye on heaven, he sought the things that are above. His life was hid with Christ in God. He lived and died waiting to be manifested with Christ in glory. (Col. 3: 1-4).

---A.H. Payne via KNOW THE TRUTH

Sentence Sermons

The ability to use experience—even of others—is true intelligence.

It is not wise to tell every thing you know, but it is best to know every thing you tell.

Some people think they are good cooks merely because they roast their neighbors.

If an infirmity of character is not removed when discovered, it will continue to spread.

If a fellow has an empty stomach, it won't let him rest until he fills it. Too bad an empty head doesn't do the same.

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