

# THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

Church of Christ  
371 W. Main Street  
Greenwood, IN 46142  
(317)888-8288

[www.churchofchristatgreenwood.org](http://www.churchofchristatgreenwood.org)

VOLUME 7 NO. 32

October 10, 2010

## **“Graceless Preaching”**

**By Steve Higginbotham**

Not long ago, I read a book written by a brother who set out to describe the preaching that took place 60 to 70 years ago. Here is what he said:

“The sermons just seemed so harsh and graceless...If you were going to preach in the 1940's and 50's in the Churches of Christ, you had better be able to quote at least seventy-five verses per sermon or you were out on your ear in no time. Never mind that they didn't fit the context of your message, that was irrelevant, you just had to be able to string them together and spit them out fast enough to let folks know that you were the right source for all of their Bible-thumping needs. Likewise, the message had to be 'hot.' If you finished your sermon without mentioning hell at least ten times and associating other denominations with the same, then you were liberal.”

Never mind the fact that the brother who wrote this wasn't even alive during the time this “harsh,” “graceless,” “Bible-thumping” preaching was supposed to have taken place. Personally, I am weary of hearing such charges against preachers of the past. To me, such caricatures and accusations betray that the people making these accusations don't really understand what grace is.

If one is traveling the broad road that leads to Hell, and I warn him, and attempt to turn him to the gospel of Christ, is that not grace? What if I describe the horrors of Hell, as presented in Scripture, in an effort to help this person make a more responsible decision regarding the direction of his life, have I then become

2

“harsh and graceless?” When one is lost in sin and another person attempts to show him the doctrinal or moral errors which are jeopardizing his salvation, is that not grace? Indeed, it is a strange view of grace that allows one to remain unchallenged in sin, while a “gospel preacher” strokes him with pleasant words and amusing stories.

Are you aware that the Bible only records one instance of Jesus ever using the word “grace?” (2 Corinthians 12:9) I recall hearing Brother Leroy Brownlow, nearly 20 years ago say the following:

“It is noteworthy that Jesus never mentioned the word [grace]: not in the Sermon on the Mount, not in his cutting sermon in Matthew 23, not in his parables, not in his prayers, not in his miracles, not in his temptations with Satan, not in sending out the 70, not in giving the great commission, and not in giving the promise of the resurrection and heaven.”

Interesting, isn't it? Jesus never mentioned the word “grace,” but he warned of Hell 11 times. Would anyone therefore dare suggest that Jesus was a “harsh and graceless” preacher? Friends, warning people of Hell and pointing them to Jesus is not harsh or graceless. What greater gift could one be given? Friends, preaching the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and seasoning our speech with salt (Colossians 4:6) is neither harsh nor graceless, but is exactly what this world needs.

## **A Scary Prayer**

**From Preachinghelp.org**

The apostle John begins the letter of 3 John by saying, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2). With those kind of prayers, do you suppose there might have been some who wished John would quit praying for them if he was going to pray that way?

Just what would happen if our health prospered “as” our soul prospered? Would people suddenly find their aches

and pains suddenly gone? Would they find new strength and lift in their step? Or would they suddenly fall ill, maybe even to the point of being on their death bed?

Hmm... "May your health prosper as your soul." Would you be good with someone praying that prayer for you?

Give it some thought.

## **A Letter From A Little Girl**

### **A Selected Thought**

Yesterday, several good friends and I were sitting in the office of a neurosurgeon. We listened to him as he explained why he left a thriving practice in a large metropolis to come a much smaller hospital in our area of the country. He said it was all because of a letter he received.

You see, he had been so busy with his job, he told us that he literally had not seen his little girl in three weeks. Then one night when he came home from work, there was a letter by his bed from his 11 year-old daughter. It was a letter in which this little girl told her daddy that she missed him and wanted more of his time. She acknowledged to her daddy that he had an important job, but she said, "Daddy, doing the 'right' thing is sometimes the 'hard' thing to do." It was at this point that this successful neurosurgeon decided he wanted to be a father first. So he left his practice and moved his family to South-Central Kentucky.

I couldn't help but be touched by this doctor's story. Before me was a man who knew that there are things in life that are more important than fame, ego, work, and money. It doesn't take a "brain surgeon" be able to identify proper values and priorities in life. Sometimes, little 11 year-old girls who miss their daddy can discern those things. The question I have for you is have you discerned these same truths? Give it some thought.