

On Ignoring "Issues"

Dub McClish

There is a rather persistent cry being made by some members of the church that preachers and writers should not bother the brethren with all of the "issues." I have heard them say, "Why do we have to hear about the problems? Why can't you just preach the Gospel and stay off the issues?" These are questions that need to be answered clearly and Scripturally.

God's Old Testament prophets didn't ignore the "issues" of their day. In fact, the purpose for which God sent them was to deal with the problems and issues of the day (idolatry, rebellion, immorality, etc.). Those people didn't like to hear about the "issues" either, so they closed their ears, eyes and hearts to the message of the prophets to their own destruction (Isa. 6:9-12)! They wanted to hear only the "smooth" things, even if it meant preaching deceitful things (Isa. 30:8-14).

Jesus didn't ignore the "issues" of his day. He applied the words of Isaiah 6:9-12 to his hearers because they didn't want to hear the issues on which he preached, (the hypocrisy, self-righteousness, false doctrine, etc., that so much characterized them). The apostles didn't ignore the "issues." Peter would have preached a much different message on Pentecost had he concerned himself with only what the people wanted to hear. He didn't preach on adultery, theft or heaven, but on the deity of Christ and their guilt for his murder. Paul didn't write to the Corinthians about how terrible Pilate was for giving Jesus up to be crucified nor how wonderful they all were. Rather, he addressed the "issues," both doctrinal and moral, that constituted their sins and errors.

In the very nature of the case, the emphasis of preaching and teaching ought to correspond to prevalent sins and errors—to "issues," if you please. This is true both of issues in the local church and in the brotherhood. The great preachers who led the restoration of New Testament Christianity nearly two centuries ago did so by raising "issues" of conflict between then-current doctrines and practices and the New Testament pattern for the church. When the move began to be made to add instruments of music, missionary societies, etc., to the church in the past century, the church was saved from total digression by those who raised these "issues" and fought them out with the digressives. The same was true with the threat of Premillennialism 60 years ago. The same was true with the anti-cooperation, anti-orphan home issue of 20 years ago. As long as men continue to raise "issues" that threaten the faith, faithful

preachers will continue to deal with them. Only the Spiritually blind and deaf would want it otherwise.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, April 2, 1987, of which I was editor.]

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