

April 18, 2021

# **Viewpoint** from the **Valley Grove Church Of Christ**

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## **Preach The Gospel In Love**

By C. R. Nichol

**W**e frequently hear: “Preach the gospel in love, and let those who differ with you alone.” I do wonder just what people mean by such advice, and who would be pleased if the preacher followed it.

I am told that forty years ago, those who were content to be Christians only, refusing to become members of sectarian bodies, or in any way affiliate with sectarian bodies, were bold in their condemnation of the use of human creeds and manmade rules of discipline in religious services. It is affirmed that they were not backward in reading from the Methodist “Discipline,” Baptist “Manual,” Presbyterian “Confession of Faith,” and other human creeds, or about pointing out the places where these books contradict the Bible. In many instances, the churches that subscribed to the human creeds resented such a course. They did not object to one reading their creeds, but they were not pleased when the reader adversely criticized those creeds. Such criticism often provoked them to debate.

Times have changed. Forty years ago, we did not have the means of transportation we now have at our command; nor did we have some of the more current ways to communicate. There has been a marked change in the way women dress, and men’s clothes also have different lines. Some affirm that law observance is not what it was forty years ago. Though there were some desperadoes then, it seems there are many more now; and even among those who are considered to be good citizens, there are those who think lightly of and disregard some of the laws in our statute books. It seems that the spirit of disregard for the law has spread throughout the land, and that very spirit has evolved into lack of respect for God’s law.

In some places, if the preacher brings to the attention of the audience the teachings of the Methodists, or others who believe in infant baptism, and then shows that such doctrine is not found in the Bible, some, or a number of, church members take him to task. They insist that he should “preach the gospel in love” and “let other people alone.” They bring to his attention that some of

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the members had with them, by invitation, people who believe it is right to baptize infants, and it is not treating them right to invite them to our services and then have them subjected to the humiliation of hearing what they believe criticized.

My question is: “How can I preach the gospel and let other people alone?” I feel certain I know how to “preach the gospel in love,” but how to preach the gospel and “let other people alone” gives me no little concern. Am I obligated to let them alone? I do wonder how I can condemn sin and “let other people alone.” In my audience may be a man who occasionally gets drunk, another person who gambles, another who is profane, and another who is living in adultery. Can I fulfill my duty as a preacher and make no reference to such sins?

If I insist that the sinner must repent to be saved, I’m running counter to Presbyterian and Primitive Baptist teachings, for they insist that salvation is independent of any conditions — that the sinner repents after he is saved. I cannot preach that repentance is necessary to salvation and let the Presbyterians and Primitive Baptists alone.

If I teach that there are no longer apostles on earth, active in the church, teaching and preaching, the Mormons declare that I am wrong, that there are now apostles in the church, teaching as in the days of Paul. How can I preach that we do not now have apostles and that all who

profess to be apostles are impostors, and let other people alone? The Mormons say they now have apostles. How can I preach that Jesus is the Christ and let other people alone? The Jews believe that Jesus was an impostor. If I preach that God never authorized sprinkling or pouring water alone, unmixed with any other element, on any man for any thing, can I let the Methodists and Presbyterians alone?

If you take careful notice, you will find that in the audience you seldom see a Roman Catholic or Mormon; and the preacher is not taken to task, though he may refer, by name, to what these people teach and offer adverse criticisms of their teachings and practices. I am unable to see how they are benefited if they do not hear what is said.

A brother who has never preached a sermon in all his life told me that I should teach the truth; that is, teach the people what they should do to be saved. He says I should not refer to what others teach, or to what is false in their teachings and practices. I do wonder if there is a parent in all the land who has not warned his children against the things he should not do. Have you spent all your time telling your children what they should do, with never a reference to the things they should not do? Do we find in the Bible that God has taught only what we should do, with never a reference to what we should not do? Did Jesus call sects by name and condemn their teachings?

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I am disgusted with the maudlin spirit rife throughout the land. Some man is guilty of a certain offense against God and society — he has flaunted the law of the land. Finally, he is in the law's clutches, and the powers that be mete out his punishment. Then some man comes to the forefront, declaring that the punishment is too severe, that mercy should be extended, that he should not be forced to suffer such severe punishment. So also there are those who profess to be Christians but who are unwilling for sin to be condemned, exposing false doctrine, if by exposing it the preacher humiliates some person.

The command says: "Preach the gospel." Brother, do not try to pull the sting from Jehovah's statement. When people do not follow God's commands, it is because they do not believe in Him; and unless they do believe in Him, they cannot be saved.

—— ***Editorial Note:***

C. R. Nichol wrote this article in January, 1957. More than sixty-four years later, many members of the Lord's church are still making this same complaint.

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## Desensitization

By Jim Lee

**D**esensitize. Now that's a big word. What does it mean? It is defined "to reduce or eliminate the sensitivity of a person."

A country boy asked a city-slicker once, "Have you ever seen a pig holding his nose?" The city-slicker answered, "No, I haven't." The country boy then said, "He's been in the stench so long, he doesn't know he stinks." "Now, I've got it," said the city-slicker. Don't you love the way country folks can shuck it down where anyone can understand?

Desensitization happens when we expose ourselves to shameful things so long that we no longer respond to it as we once did. The Bible teaches us to keep our senses keen. Our senses are to be "*exercised to discern both good and evil*" (Hebrews 5:14). We need to have discernment to make good choices and approve of things that are excellent (Philippians 1:10). But too much exposure to filth has a tendency to numb the senses. Our world is full of people who "*having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more*" (Ephesians 4:19). It is possible for our consciences to become seared (1 Timothy 4:2). I'm

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reminded of a newly hired construction worker who hit his thumb with a hammer and doubled over in pain. His boss walked by and said, “You know, if you’ll do that every day for a while, it’ll get to where it doesn’t hurt anymore.” He’s right. All the nerves will be dead. That’s desensitization.

In the days of Jeremiah, things got so bad that Jeremiah said the people did not “*know how to blush*” (Jeremiah 6:15). It makes me wonder — are we there? Have we lost the ability to blush at anything? Are there things that used to bother you but they don’t bother you any longer? Are you watching things on television that at one time you would not have watched? Are you going places that at one time you would not visit? Are you wearing things that at one time you would not have worn? Are you more silent about things that at one time you would have spoken out against? Has your zeal for the Lord reached the “lukewarm” level (Revelation 3:16)?

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***Visitors — We pray that you benefit spiritually from our worship together and hope to see you again.***

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## ***Study Your Bible***

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### **April Birthdays:**

The 2nd Jeanette Cooper

The 11th Wesley Hisaw

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### **Sunday**

Bible Study . . . 9:30 A.M.

Worship . . . . . 10:30 A.M.

Worship . . . . . 5:00 P.M.

### **Wednesday**

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

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