

Fire In My Bones

Joe Slater

Preaching God's word can be trying! Especially is that true when opposition arises all around, making the work appear wasted. Jeremiah even became angry with God over it. He hadn't wanted to preach in the first place, but God persuaded him (20:7a). Now his message of impending judgment made him the laughingstock of Jerusalem (20:7b, 8).

Jeremiah threatened to quit (20:9a). But he couldn't. To quote the weeping prophet, God's word "*was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones. I was weary of holding back, and I could not*" (20:9b).

Over four decades ago I first heard the saying, "Don't preach unless you have to." I thought that was really odd, as though it was discouraging me from preaching. Now I think I understand what he meant. Just having a little Bible knowledge and the "gift of gab" won't make you a preacher! That "fire in your bones" has to be there. Otherwise you might well quit when the mockers jeer and even your friends turn against you.

Weren't you encouraged by hearing Nathan Boyd when he was here last month? He gets better and better each time he's here! I am thankful for men like Nathan as well as the two others we are blessed to support (Chuck Murrell and Brandon Fergusson), who are willing to pull up stakes and devote endless hours to preparing to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

I am also thankful for good schools like Brown Trail School of Preaching and my own alma mater, Bear Valley Bible Institute, where men like these can receive the instruction and training they need to serve well as gospel preachers. Their professors will focus on faithfulness to God and His word rather than the latest

"scholarly" (i.e. liberal) theories of the theological cemeteries (oops, I mean, seminaries).

We pray that the fire will continue to burn in the hearts of these men and others like them. May they always preach because they have to!

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Integrity

In his recent autobiography, "Mean Joe Greene," told a story about the late Chuck Noll, former head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Noll was a great coach, winning four Super Bowls, and earning the respect of his players. Greene said that as they were preparing for a game against the Houston Oilers, someone presented Coach Noll with an Oilers' playbook. Coach Noll quickly called a team meeting and said, "Gentlemen, this is the Houston Oilers' playbook. We play them twice this year. We have all of their plays and their game plans. But we're not going to open it. That's not how we do things. We're going to prepare; we're going to line up against them on the field; and we're going to do what we do, and that will give us the best chance to win." With that, Coach Noll threw the playbook in the trash can and walked away.

Integrity! We just don't see enough of it, but when we see it, we admire it. It's no wonder Paul instructed us to hold the doctrine of Christ with integrity (Titus 2:7). Friends, you may know the truth, and you may proclaim it to others, but if those who hear your words don't see them coupled with integrity, those words, though true, will ring hollow.

"...in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility" (Titus 2:7).

--Steve Higginbotham (Knoxville, TN) via Bulletin Gold

Mavericks For Christ

During the 2008 presidential campaign you heard the word "maverick" used rather frequently. I stumbled across the story of the origin of the word.

In the mid-1800s, Texas rancher Samuel Augustus Maverick refused to brand his cattle. When neighboring cowboys came upon a calf without a brand, they called it a "maverick." The word entered the English language and came to refer to a person who takes an independent stand, refusing to conform.

We, as Christians, are called to be mavericks. In Romans 12:2 we are told to be people who are not conformed to this world, but instead are transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we are able to test and prove what God's will is for us. We need to make sure we are not branded by any earthly thing, but instead that we belong solely to our Heavenly Father.

It is so easy to become comfortable here in this world. We get caught up with friends, jobs, and hobbies. We have to remember that we are strangers here, and that our home is with God in heaven. If we are too involved in this world, it is difficult to remember and see to whom we belong.

No matter what your political leanings are about any presidential candidate, we know it is not only ok to be a maverick for Christ, but we are called to be so.

--Luke Bower (Abilene, TX) via Old Paths