

# YOU'RE NOT WELCOME

*By Pastor Del Wray*

## **Bible preachers are not welcome anymore in churches today:**

We often hear pastors, radio preachers, and televangelists refer to the great prophets and Apostles of the Bible. Rightly, these Bible characters are lauded as examples for today's Christians. The problem is, hardly any of those giants of history would be welcome in America's churches today!

On the whole, America's Christians today do not want to hear the truth. They want a place where they can be made to feel good, where they can be entertained, where they can socialize and make business contacts, and where their children can have a place to play.

To many Christian parents, it is far more important that their church have a gymnasium and constant youth programs than it is that their children hear the truth of God's Word and learn the rigorous disciplines of a Christian life. Recreation is far more important to them than Bible study. In fact, most parents seem to believe that the only way to "keep the kids in church" is to have constant, non-stop entertainment. Of course, it doesn't work.

Furthermore, it seems that most of today's sermons amount to little more than "Positive Mental Attitude," feel-good drivel: "How to think better about yourself," "How to squander more money on yourself," "How to 'find yourself,'" "How to pamper yourself," ad nauseum, ad infinitum. Comparing the preaching and philosophy of most churches today to that of Bible characters will quickly reveal how unbiblical our churches have become.

For example, can you imagine how the average church in America today would react to the decisions of Daniel and the three Hebrew children? All four of them were unashamed and unhesitant to practice civil disobedience. All four of them were charged with capital crimes by their government and sentenced to death. In Daniel's case, all he had to do was not pray out loud to God for thirty days. Thirty days! I can just hear today's Christian pragmatists screaming, "It's only for thirty days. You can still pray in your heart. We must obey the government." Can you imagine Daniel being asked to preach a message on "How and When to Defy Your Government" to the vast majority of churches in America today? Forget it!

Moreover, take a look at practically every single Old Testament prophet. Ninety percent of their preaching was negative. They seldom had anything positive to say, especially about the way their nation's leaders were behaving. They were often jailed, beaten, starved, or even killed. They were as familiar with prisons as they were with pulpits. They were despised by political leaders, rejected by religious leaders, and shunned by business leaders.

It wasn't much better for the Apostles and disciples in the New Testament. John the Baptist was beheaded for "meddling in politics." The Apostles were beaten, stoned, and jailed. The Apostle Paul was especially hated. He was hated by Jews; he was hated by Romans; he was hated by

businessmen; he was hated by politicians; he was even hated by fellow ministers.

Can you imagine the Apostle Paul preaching a message on "Conquering Low Self-Esteem"? Get real! Give Paul an opportunity today to preach to a church of one thousand members one Sunday morning, and by Sunday night (if they even had a Sunday night service), there might be fifty people back to hear him.

It is probably difficult for this generation of Christians to even comprehend that this fearless, uncompromising, "like it or lump it" kind of preaching was the kind of preaching that America cut its teeth on. The colonies and frontier of this nation were filled with prophet-like clergymen. And it didn't really matter which denomination one attended, either; he or she heard the same kind of preaching.

Whether it was the Baptist Joab Houghton or the Presbyterian James Caldwell or the Lutheran John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg or the Episcopalian Samuel Provost or the German Reformed Nicholas Herkimer, they were all plucky, pugnacious preachers! Why, I can even recall hearing old fashioned "hell-fire and damnation" preachers when I was a kid.

It was a "hell-fire" Baptist preacher that led my mother to Christ. I can even recall Archie Wineager meetings, I heard the great "hell-fire" preachers from virtually every Protestant denomination in the country. I remember the crowds of thousands sitting on those hard, wooden benches for hours listening intently to those masterful sermons. In my mind, I can still see (and smell) the sawdust floors where hundreds of people rushed to the front in answer to those altar calls and the studio high atop the platform where radio stations transmitted those great sermons over the air. Alas, those days are gone.

No wonder our people today have become self-centered, sensitive, and shallow. They seldom, if ever, hear honest, straight-forward, fearless preaching.

Therefore, the next time you hear someone refer to the great men of the Bible, ask yourself, "Would that prophet be welcome in my church today?" In most instances, the answer is a resounding no! And now you know why America is in the shape it's in today: the nation always takes the form of its preachers and churches.