

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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The Kind of Preachers We Need and
The Kind of Preacher I Want To Be (Part 4)

Luke 1:13-17

Last month we concluded thinking about The Privilege that John had. Gabriel had told Zacharias that John would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. John did just that. Luke 3:7 says, *“Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him.”* The rest of verse 7 down through verse 14 contain the message that he preached to them. We have no numbers as to exactly how many repented, but Matthew 3:5-6 says, *“Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”* What the angel said about John came to pass. He had the wonderful privilege of seeing many converted. We can see the same thing happen today. John was just the forerunner of Christ and preached the kingdom of heaven and a coming Christ. We preach a Christ Who has come, Who has died upon the cross to pay for our sin, and Who rose from the grave to give us victory over death. John had a great message, but we have an even greater message. John preached a future Christ Who was certain to come, but we preach a Christ Who has already come and won the victory. What an amazing privilege we have to tell lost sinners that Jesus died for them! May we be faithful to tell the message and see sinners converted.

The angel continued and told Zacharias about The Precedent that John would enjoy. He said, *“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.”* I am sure that sometimes John felt like he was all alone. He was a great man, but he was human. He accomplished much, but he still had to battle the thoughts that went through his mind. We find later in his life, while he was in prison, that he sent his disciples to question Jesus as to whether He was the Messiah or

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not (Luke 7:19-23). Why did John do that? The answer is really not hard—he was human. He was discouraged. Jesus did not rebuke John at this point. He sent the messengers back telling them of the miracles that He had done and the messages that He had preached. He confirmed to John that He really was the Messiah. Then he spent six verses talking about how great a prophet John was.

But what does this have to do with what Gabriel told Zacharias? John was not the first man to preach the way he did. He was not the first preacher to preach a message that would be unpopular. John would be like Elijah both physically in the way he dressed, and also professionally in the message that he proclaimed. Many would turn to God, but many others would reject his message and despise him, just like they did Elijah in his day. This statement about Elijah would be a reminder that God has always had his people. We can turn to many places in the Old Testament and see that reality. Sometimes it would not be a preacher. It would be a man like Joseph or Daniel, or a king like Hezekiah and Josiah. Sometimes it would be a very small minority, but God always had His people.

John was not alone. Others, in particular Elijah, had gone before him. We can take comfort in that fact. Many times it seems that no one wants to hear the message that we preach. Do we give up? No! We should not give up because of our call from God, but we can also keep pressing on because of those that have gone before. To be honest, the opposition that we face is nothing compared to what John and many others faced, but it is opposition nonetheless. We can look to the precedent of those who have gone before. They did not quit. They continued on. We will not dress like Elijah or John, but we can preach with the same fervency that they preached. We can preach against sin and talk about God just like they did. There are those Bible characters like Elijah, John, Peter, Paul, and a host of others, who were faithful. But there are others down through history like William Tyndale, John Bunyan, William Carey, David Livingstone, and a great many more that we can emulate. Even in more recent years there are some who have gone before and set the precedent.

Men like Harry Ironside, Bob Jones Sr., B. R. Lakin, Harold Sightler, Oliver Greene, and Maze Jackson come to mind. These are men who went before us and did not compromise. They preached against sin and took a stand for God. They did not lay the banner down. They finished the course faithfully. We can too!

O dear believer, when it seems like you are all alone, remember those who have gone before. Dear preacher, when it seems like you are the only one who still has convictions and still believes in practicing holiness, who still believes the Bible is our standard and rule of practice, remember your precedent. Remember those who went before you. You are not the only one now, and you certainly are not the only that there ever has been. Keep pressing on!

Gabriel mentioned a third manifestation of being powered by the Spirit. It is The Process. He said that John would be able “*to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.*” The same word is used here as in verse 16. There it spoke of a turning, or conversion, toward God. Here it speaks of a conversion that affects our actions toward our fellow man. Notice it says “*the fathers to the children*” and “*the disobedient to...the just.*” John preached a salvation that changed not only man’s relationship and standing before God, but also his relationships and actions toward his fellow man. He would not make things right with God without making things right with man. John preached this in the message that we mentioned earlier in Luke 3. If they confessed their sin to God, it would change how they lived. That is Bible salvation. That is what all of Scripture teaches. It is what the angel said John would do, and that is what he did.

I do not preach nor believe in a salvation that does not affect the way people live. In our day, all people care about is supposedly making things right with God. But it has no impact in the way they live their lives towards other people. That is not Bible salvation! A salvation that does not change your life has not changed your soul! People can talk all they want to about what they said or who dealt

with them, but dear friend, if the blood of Christ has cleansed you, it changed not only your standing with God, it changed your actions toward God and men as well. You can read verse after verse after verse throughout the New Testament epistles that talk about the way a believer will live after salvation. The modern mantra is this, “It does not matter what you say or how you live as long as your heart is in the right place.” Not true! False teaching! That is not what the Bible says. It does matter how you live. A fig tree will bear figs because it is a fig tree. A peach tree will bear peaches because it is a peach tree. Likewise, a saved person will live like a saved person because he is saved. What if they don’t live right? They are probably not saved.

In case you did not understand, I repudiate the modern teaching that has infested our Independent Baptist circles that our lifestyle does not matter. If you accept that, then you reject the clear teaching of the Bible. John would preach a message that would affect the way people acted toward one another. The message would change how they lived. If we preach the same message that John preached, then it will change how people live today. The problem with most churches is that they do not preach like John. They want to get along with everybody to the exclusion of right preaching that affects the living of people. John preached and people got right with God and with each other. Getting right with God will mandate that one will get right with others and live according to the teachings of Scripture.

The final manifestation of being powered by the Spirit is The Preparation. Verse 17 concludes with the statement by Gabriel, “*To make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*” To make ready means “to prepare; to make the necessary preparations; to get everything ready.” The term is often used in the preparation of a feast or a supper. It carries the idea of getting everything ready for an important event. This same word is used in Matthew 3:3 and Mark 1:3. These verses quote Isaiah 40:3, “*Prepare ye the way of the LORD.*” John did just that. He prepared the way for Jesus’ first advent. There had not been a prophet for 400 years. God had been

silent. But He had not forgotten His promise. He sent the forerunner, John, to get the people ready for the Messiah. John did it perfectly.

As John prepared the way for Christ's first advent, so we are preparing the way for Christ's second advent. John preached, "One mightier than I cometh." We can say the same thing. John was referring to Christ's first coming; we preach Christ's second coming. Christ is coming again and everyone must be ready when He does come.

This word (prepare; make ready) is also used in John 14:2. There I think it refers to Christ preparing the marriage supper of the Lamb. He is preparing a place—a place at the table. While He is doing that, we are preparing for that same marriage supper. We are extending the invitation to come and be a part of that marriage supper. While Christ is making everything ready there, we are making people ready here by offering them salvation through Christ. He is the only way to Heaven and the only way to be prepared for the marriage supper. He is coming soon to take His bride. May we help others to be ready when He comes.