

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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Volume 7, Issue 9

February 2011

The Kind of Preachers We Need and
The Kind of Preacher I Want To Be (Part 6)

Luke 1:13-17

John the Baptist pointed out sin. Scripture clearly teaches that prominence or position or power did not matter. If someone was involved in sin (in this case Herod the king), John pointed it out. Having considered His Direction, we now notice His Decree. Matthew 14:4 says, “*For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.*” Several things stand out about this message from John. The word said is in the imperfect tense. This is important because the imperfect tense carries the idea of repeated action. John did not just mention this sin of Herod in passing and then never mention it again. That is the practice of some preachers today. They do not completely ignore sin; they just mention it in passing, but never directly and do not practice a repeated denunciation. Others may repeatedly preach against sin and face the opposition of people in the pew. Some people may get upset when a preacher does repeatedly preach against sin. But that is Biblical. Here in this passage, John repeatedly denounced Herod’s sin.

The Bible does not give any particulars about how often John preached about Herod’s sin, so we can only conjecture on that thought. I can imagine Herod’s entourage passing near where John was preaching. When he did, John pointed his finger and said, “*It is not lawful.*” If Herod passed that way daily, John preached against the sin daily. Perhaps Herod did not personally pass that way. The subject of Herod came up when John was preaching against sin. Here was a well-known example of a man committing sin. John denounced that sin by saying, “*It is not lawful.*” John repeatedly and vehemently pointed out Herod’s sin.

-2-

However it was that John preached against this sin, it grabbed Herod’s attention. Remember, John only had a ministry of six months. In that six months, he preached against Herod’s sin, and Herod knew about it. Whether it was in Herod’s presence or whether the news reached back to Herod, John touched a nerve when he preached against Herod’s sin. Herod knew what this preacher was preaching.

Not only do we notice the tense of the verb said, but consider also John’s plain statement, “*It is not lawful.*” John did not beat around the bush, and John did not apologize for preaching against sin. Several times I have heard preachers make excuses and apologize for having to confront or preach against sin. Why do they do this? If God has said it is wrong, what is there to apologize for? John said, “*It is not lawful.*” That word lawful means “right or allowed.” Herod was doing wrong. He was doing something that God did not allow, and John, being the man of God that he was, pointed it out.

Now consider the sin that Herod was involved in. What was it that stirred John up so much? It was adultery. It is a sin very clearly condemned by God, but which in our day is not considered that bad of a sin. Why do I say that? Because it is so prominent in our society. It is glorified on many TV shows. Now, many will say that it is wrong to cheat on their spouse. But if the marriage is over, they will say that it is all right to “date around.” Is that what the Bible says? We cannot be certain of all the details, but we do know that Herodias was married to Philip, Herod’s brother. Somehow the marriage between Herodias and Philip ended. Herod then married Herodias, according to Mark 6:17. (There may have been an affair between Herodias and Herod before the first marriage ended, but we cannot be certain of that. For the sake of simplicity, we will just say that the marriage ended, and Herod and Herodias married.) Is that marriage wrong? Hardly anyone would say that the new marriage was wrong, especially in today’s modern society. But what did God say?

Did Scripture condemn what Herod had done? Yes, it did, and John knew what Scripture said. Leviticus 18:16 says, “*Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother’s wife: it is thy brother’s nakedness.*” The verse does not give any exceptions. It does not permit a brother to marry his brother’s wife, if she divorces the first brother. Herod thought that he could do whatever he wanted because he was the king. But God had a man who was not afraid to confront the king’s sin. Many in that day probably thought that John was making a big deal out of nothing. (I say that because that is the common reaction of people today, and I doubt they were any different in John’s day.) Some thought that it was a minor issue. But God had said what he considered it to be—sin. John, as a Spirit-filled man, could not help but preach what God said.

This was not some minor issue. This was sin that God had clearly condemned. John could do nothing else but preach against this sin. But let me address something else. Some will say, “I will preach against the big sins, but minor things I will leave alone.” But the little sins lead to bigger sins. Consider Lot. His downfall began with his looking at the well watered plains of Sodom. Consider the Jews who bowed before the image in Daniel 3. They bowed before the image because they would not refuse to eat the king’s meat back in chapter 1. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah did not eat the king’s meat, and they had the courage to refuse to bow before the image. Herod’s sin was not a “small” sin, but I am convinced that most people would see it as something that does not really matter. It did matter because it mattered to God. Sin, whether it is small in our eyes or unimportant in our eyes, matters to God. If we will confront and preach against the small, private, sins, then we may not have to deal with the “big” sins.

I hope that you understand what I am trying to say. WE MUST PREACH AGAINST SIN! We must view sin like God views sin. It seems that we do not think that sin is bad anymore. We make every excuse under the sun as to why the sin that someone is committing is not wrong. We will say, “That is in the Old Testament. It is not

wrong now.” Is that so? Did God explicitly nullify that sin in the New Testament? If He did not, then it is still wrong. Other excuses too numerous to list are offered. But they do not change what God says in His Word. Sin is still sin. If it was sin in the Old Testament, it is still sin today. We must repudiate this modern acceptance of sin. There are no big and little sins. There is just sin. If it is sin, we must condemn it.

I cannot help but think that most people in the world today, and even most church members, would not think of Herod’s sin as a “bad” sin. I may be wrong, but I think most people would ignore and pass over Herod’s sin. But John did not. We should not either. In most churches and pulpits today, Herod’s sin would be a minor sin, and would not even be preached against. But that loose image and perception of sin has put us in the situation that we are in today.

What situation am I talking about? It is the abundance of sin that is in our Fundamental, Independent Baptist churches. You would think that the churches in this movement would be characterized by holy, righteous living. Many in these churches do practice holiness, but in other churches there is vile wickedness that is being practiced. There are things that have happened in Fundamental, Independent Baptist churches down through the years that years ago would not have happened in the world. Why is gross sin being practiced?

Tamatha and I have been members of five churches since we have been married. We have tried to labor and do whatever we could while members of those churches. In two of those churches, gross sin was committed before we joined those churches. We did not know anything about the sin until years after the sins were committed. The people involved in committing those sins confessed after being confronted about their sin. I mention these simply to let us know that our Independent, Fundamental Baptist churches are not the pure places that they should be. We joined two churches where gross sin had been committed not knowing what had occurred there in the past. How could these sins be committed in a Fundamental, Independent

Baptist church? I think it is because we have a low view of sin. I think it is because we do not preach against sin enough.

Let me give you some other examples. A preacher in Florida, Bob Gray, committed child abuse for years. When it was about to come out, he became a missionary to Germany. We do not know all of the details, but it seems as if the church tried to cover up this gross sin. There are other accounts of pastors having affairs and moving on to other churches and committing adultery at the new church.

While in a used book store last summer, I picked up a book that listed the largest Independent Baptist churches from the 1970's. Two of those leading churches had pastors that were later discovered to be involved in immorality. Those were the ones that were known. There may have been others that were never found out. I do not relish in recounting this wickedness. I mention it so we do not ignore sin. Sin is real! It must be preached against! When it is committed, it must be dealt with. I will have more to say about preaching against sin next month.