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Ronald E. Hawkins

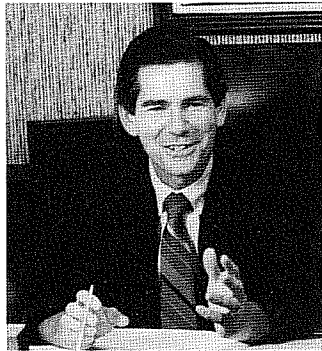
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Preaching with Wisdom

by Ronald E. Hawkins

Helps for pastors abound at present. Though advice is available on how to run every phase of church life, we must not lose sight of our most valuable ally, our most important tool, and our supreme task. *Our ally is wisdom, our tool is the Word of God, and our task is to faithfully teach it.*

In Ecclesiastes 10 Solomon points out the dangers inherent in the ministry. He reminds us that a little folly may ruin the man who has enjoyed a great reputation (v. 1). He accentuates the dangers associated with work. Those moving stones must beware, and those digging pits may find themselves imprisoned by their own efforts.

Surely our position as ministers in Christ's church is a precarious one. Satan would like nothing better than to destroy us, and we frequently meet those who seem to be his willing assistants in the enterprise. We might be tempted to succumb to fear. However, Solomon reminds us that the wisdom of God is ours (v. 10). It gives us direction and brings us to success. Truly it is our most valuable ally.

God's wisdom is ours

for the purpose of edification and direction. We need not fear, nor wander aimlessly. We have met the wisdom of God incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). We have in our hands the wisdom of God inscripturated; His infallible Word (2 Tim. 3:15). We may know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we can survive the dangers that surround us. We survive because of our submission to incarnated and inscripturated wisdom.

The primary tool for our ministry is the Word of God. Solomon reminds us in Ecclesiastes 12:11 that the Word is entirely a gift from the Shepherd of Israel. Solomon and Paul are in agreement that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is given for our profit (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The wise preacher teaches his people the Word of God. When he is discouraged with his people he teaches them the Word of God. When he is concerned for them, happy for them, sad for them, and so on, he teaches the Word of God to them. His preaching rests on the settled conviction that this is his greatest service. He believes in the power of preaching and is totally concerned that his preaching be profitable to those who hear it.

His preaching follows a particular course. He does not get his sermon at 11:30 Saturday night. In Ecclesiastes 12:9 we discover the wisdom preacher method. Daily he pours over the Word of God. He ponders over, seeks out, and sets in order the Proverbs. He brings Scriptures together and focuses them on the meeting of human needs. We are informed in verse 10 that the wisdom preacher seeks words that fit the problems his peo-

ple are experiencing. He counsels from his pulpit. He preaches in such a way that people are led into the experience of living profitably. They discover through his wisdom the answers to problems they face throughout the week.

His preaching is dichotomous. It is designed to goad and to secure. The goading statements of Scripture and the securing promises are all given by one Shepherd (Eccl. 12:11). The preacher seeks to goad his people when they are errant. He does not evade his prophetic responsibilities. The preacher also celebrates the encouraging promises of God with his people. Wisdom, however, demands that the preacher give his people a healthy diet of both goads and tent stakes.

Nothing is more discour-

aging to a congregation than a pastor who practices the art of spear-chucking. People thrive on a balanced diet. Goading exhortation in balance with encouraging reflection on the securing dimensions of God's Word will build strong disciples.

Wisdom calls us preacher. It calls us to believe in what we are doing. The wise preacher will rejoice in his opportunities to preach. He will perspire over his preaching and not simply wait on inspiration; although he will be grateful for it when it comes. He will focus on meeting people's needs. His listeners will rise up and call him blessed.

■ **Ronald E. Hawkins** is chairman of the Department of Church Ministries and director of counseling at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Bible Facts

And I saw a new heaven...

1. Heaven is being prepared by Christ Himself (John 14:3).
2. Heaven is only for those who have been born again (John 3:3).
3. Heaven is described as a glorious city, likened to pure gold and clear glass (Rev. 21:11, 18).
4. The name of this city is the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2).
5. It is in the shape of a cube, with the length, width, and height being equal (Rev. 21:16).
6. Its size is 12,000 furlongs, roughly 1,400 miles long, wide, and high (Rev. 21:16).
7. The city rests upon 12 layers of foundational stones, with each layer being inlaid with a different precious gem (Rev. 21:19-20).
8. Each foundation has one of the names of the 12 apostles on it (Rev. 21:14).
9. The wall around the city is made of pure jasper (Rev. 21:18).
10. The height of the wall is approximately 216 feet (Rev. 21:17).
11. The wall has 12 gates, three on each of the four sides (Rev. 21:12).
12. Each gate is made of solid pearl (Rev. 21:21).
13. Each gate has on it the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12).
14. An angel stands guard at each gate (Rev. 21:12).
15. The gates will never be shut (Rev. 21:25).

■ **Harold L. Willmington.** This list is the first in a series of facts about heaven. Adapted from *Willmington's Book of Bible Lists*, published by Tyndale House Publishers.