

THOUGHTS
ON
PLAIN PREACHING.

BY JACOB H. BROUNER.

THE charge given by Paul to his son Timothy, was, *preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

It must be observable to all who are acquainted with the present state of the christian world, that the time has fully come, when men will not endure sound doctrine.

Permit us therefore on this occasion to offer a few thoughts on plain preaching.

When the Apostle declared the testimony of God unto the Corinthians, it was his determination not to preach any thing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, and this he did

* 2 Tim. iv. 234.

not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, for his speech and his preaching *was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and power.

It appears plain from the word of God, that wherever the Apostles preached, their hearers were not left in the dark, respecting Jesus and the resurrection, for want of plainness on their part in preaching the gospel; so they †by manifestation of the truth, commended themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, they handled not the word of God deceitfully; they kept back no part of the gospel, nor did they deliver its truths in such away that their hearers could not determine what was, or what was not their doctrine. They had never been taught the popular art of preaching, which many have at this day, so as professedly to preach the everlasting unchangable love of God unto his people, and their eternal salvation as the fruit of it, to a church or people who abhor such doctrines, and still by their preaching please them.

It is to be lamented by all who love the truth, whose souls are fed only with the sincere milk of the word, that many labour hard in their preaching to hide their sentiments lest they should displease some of their hear-

* 1 Cor. 2 : 4.

† 2 Cor. 4 : 2.

ers. But let such remember the language of Paul, *I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue; and †except ye utter by the tongue, words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken, for ye shall speak into the air. Some there are, who notwithstanding they profess to believe, and have subscribed to the doctrines of the gospel, do not preach them for fear of offending; while others go still farther, and say they are not only unprofitable, but dangerous, and ought not to be preached. The word of God however is clear on this point; every doctrine revealed in the word of God must be profitable, as well as every precept, for the same rule by which we establish the first, we prove the second. †All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. There are those, who on the other hand for fear of running into this error, in their preaching will have nothing to do with the experimental or practical part of the gospel. But let such be reminded that the whole counsel of God ought to be pro-

* 1 Cor. 14 : 19.

† 1 Cor. 14 : 9.

† Tim. 3 : 16, 17.

claimed by his ministers, and not a part only, and that too, in a plain and impressive manner.

The nature and design of the gospel makes it necessary to be plain. The gospel addresses men as sinners, guilty in the sight of God, destroyed by their own follies, and perishing for the lack of knowledge. The word of God clearly displays the depravity of human nature, and the helpless state of man; and while men remain ignorant of those truths, they will never see the necessity, the beauty, nor the glory of the gospel. Again, the gospel plainly reveals the person, the blood, and righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of hope for miserable sinners. The ordinances of the gospel, and the subjects, and the various duties devolving on all the followers of the Lamb, are likewise clearly revealed. Therefore, the ministers of the gospel, on all those points, should be plain and explicit.

The scriptures, by which the servants of Christ are to prove their doctrine, are so plain and perfect, that a *way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein; yea, he that runneth may read: well might the prophet say, †to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them, and not on account of any deficiency in the word of the Lord; for that is perfect converting the soul.

* Isaiah 35 : 8.

† Isaiah 8 : 20.

Again, as men by nature are opposed to the gospel of Christ, and more ready to receive error than truth; being better pleased with the form of religion than its power. Preachers should therefore deal faithfully and plainly with their hearers, and not deceive them on so important a subject, the salvation of the soul: for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; especially so when by taking heed unto himself and to the doctrine, he shall both save himself and those that hear him, from that flood of errors which Antichrist has cast out of his mouth, by which men are carried away.

Such is the awful depravity of men, and the enmity of some, who, alas! profess to be christians; while the servants of Christ who are valiant from the truth, have preached Christ and him crucified, they have been charged with the enormous crime of confining themselves to the word of God; but whether it be right for the ministers of Christ to prove and establish their doctrine by the writings and sayings of men, or by the word of God, let such judge. We believe the Apostles were content to confine themselves in their preaching to the word of the Lord: but should it be argued that the world is more civilized, and that men are more learned now than in the days of the Apostles, we answer, that the world by wisdom knew not God in

their day, nor is it possible for men at the present age, by all their supposed superior wisdom to obtain a knowledge of God.

Seeing then that the knowledge of God cannot on this principle be received; the gospel which Christ commissioned his Apostles to preach, whereby sinners are taught to know the Lord, should be preached not with words which man's wisdom teach, but *in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

It is a lamentable fact, that many in their preaching, instead of holding forth Christ unto the people, hold forth themselves, and thereby eclipse the glory of Christ. It was not so with Paul: Christ, says he, sent me to preach the gospel †not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect, for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. Alas! "Too often the cross of Christ is rendered of none effect, through the vain affectation of the preachers, to recommend it by the affected graces of elocution, or the ostentatious parade of learning and philosophy. Thus its edge is blunted, its convincing plainness is obscured, its general beauty and glory are tarnished, while the preacher has his worthless reward in human applause or human popularity."

* 1 Cor. 2 : 12.

* 1 Cor. 1 : 17, 18.

AN *or F*
ESSAY *you!*
ON THE *183*
KINGDOM
OF
CHRIST.

BY ABRAHAM BOOTH,
OF LONDON.

“They shall speak of the Glory of Thy Kingdom.”
Psalm cxlv. 11.

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