

Enduring the Sound Doctrine ... Exposing the Myth of Valentine's Day

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(Sabbath Sermon, 15th February, 2014)

Apostles Peter and Paul in Culture Shock!

If the apostle Peter or Paul were to stroll through this life again, how will they cope in the modern religious world?

First, modern life itself would strike them as somewhat quaint and otherworldly, what with zooming cars and ear-hugging mobile phones and cloud-piercing airplanes buzzing overhead! But as devout followers of Christ, they would seek to find out if the Christian faith they lived for and died for still exists.

On first encounter, the strangeness of contemporary Christianity would confound them; the shallowness of today's church-goers would amaze them, and the descent of church ritual into pagan myths would alarm them.

First, they would miss most church services if they intend, week after week, to visit the various churches. As their custom was, they would make a point of attending services on the Sabbath (Acts 17:2; 16:13), but most of the Christian world would be holding services on Sunday.

Nonetheless, none of the two 'visiting' apostles would be too surprised. They foresaw just such a sad trend emerging in Christianity. The Apostle Peter wrote in his second epistle:

¹ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

² And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

³ And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

In 2nd Timothy 4 Paul wrote to Timothy, his protégé:

¹ I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom;

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

The apostle's instruction was straight to the point: Be ready to preach the WORD at all times—whether or not people would like it—and do so reproving, rebuking and exhorting with all patience and instruction.

Content is Sacred

The apostle's instruction is first and foremost a charge to the preacher: Be ready; be on standby to preach the Word regardless of the occasion and the likely reception that will be accorded it. There's no special time to preach the truth and a time when it's inappropriate to do so. Audience reception should neither influence the content nor occasion of the preacher's message. In other words, don't vary or put off the message according to the audience or the occasion.

God's truth endures forever; the Word is for all occasions.

Delivery is Dynamic

While the content of the Gospel message should not be subjected to any change or editing, the apostle Paul advocates variety in the delivery of the unchanging truth of God. He recommends three main methods of delivery:

(1) Reprove: Man is prone to and laden with sin; point out their faults to them and so lead them to God.

(2) Rebuke: Human nature as it is, people are often incorrigible. They may know the truth but still sin. Tell them to their face that they have veered off course and that they need to repent (Isa. 58:1).

(3) Exhort: As a preacher, do also encourage your audience and lift up their spirits! The Word of God is not a one-way diet! The Word is full of hope and assurance. So address their fears and assure them of their security in Christ.

In what spirit and mode?

"In (Grk) all patience and instruction":

(a) *The preacher cannot afford to be an impatient soul! He must bear with the people (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Some will take time to grow up spiritually (Rom. 14:1-4). Others have special needs. So don't be offhand with them. Instead, help them grow (Rom. 15:1); be their mentor. Nurture them.*

(b) *Instruction or teaching is the vehicle, the means, by which the preacher reprove, rebukes and exhorts his listeners. He should not just criticize and judge (note James' warning, 3:1) but essentially teach to cause understanding and spiritual fruitfulness.*

But why the urgency to preach the pure Word now and at all times?

Sound Teaching will Irk Many

It was a prediction at the time he said it, but the apostle Paul was so sure of it—as every divine prophecy is—he charged Timothy to prepare against it; it was what informed his urgent command to him—“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”.

What did he prophesy was going to happen?

A time will come when people will not tolerate sound teaching; they won't bear with it.

What will they do?

Instead of sound doctrine, they will follow their desires and those evil desires will determine the sort of teachers they will listen to or, as the text puts it, “accumulate to themselves”. So then, their desires will make them doctrinally selective but not for a positive reason—it's to filter out the truth so they will be serenaded by myths! Their ears itch for myths not the sin-rebuking truth!

Such a time is ours—when most people will not tolerate *healthful* teaching but crave for fables. It's a mark of the end time!

God-commissioned Preacher, Stand out from the Crowd

To Timothy—“But watch thou”! Distinguish yourself as a true evangelist fully and dutifully. How?

1. Be sober in all things
2. Endure afflictions—it comes with the job. An occupational hazard!

Timothy is being urged by Apostle Paul to stand out from the crowd of the myth-spewing false teachers already mentioned.

So then, as a true minister, your mandate is from God and the Lord Jesus Christ who will judge both the living and the dead at His coming (2 Tim. 4:1). You can't afford to be remiss in your work. You should realize the enormity of your work as a preacher. The Lord Jesus is going to judge by His "BREATHED WORD" and so you must preach accordingly guided by its self-declared purpose:

¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The end result of sound teaching is the Christian fruit of good works. This should be the goal of the preacher; what his preaching should achieve in the life of his audience.

What about you the listener? What should be your attitude?

Psych yourself up to receive the Word in its undiluted form, willing and prepared to be reformed, encouraged and instructed by it.

The alternative is a message without power and without bite—myths!

The test is to find out if what you are hearing or love to hear is based on Bible truth or man-made traditions which only have entertainment value!

Such traditions include the unbiblical 25th December birthday of Christ renamed Christmas from *Saturnalia*, Sunday worship and Easter. Another is St Valentine's Day.

Valentine's Day is Older than St. Valentine

Celebrated just yesterday, Feb. 14, Valentine's Day is said to commemorate love—and love cannot be a bad thing. After all, the Bible says "God is love", and love is the whole purpose of divine law.

But is the love Valentine's Day promotes in the same class as the love God represents and His Word advocates?

If you are a true believer in tune with the values of heaven, Valentine love is cause for concern. It parrots love and love, but that love is mostly hollow and self-serving. The so-called Christian world may 'claim Valentine's Day for Jesus', but the antecedents of the annual celebration tell a different story. There's a sensual object at the core.

So how did Valentine's Day originate?

The traditional official line is that it's dedicated to a Saint Valentine (exactly which of three St Valentines it remains unclear to date) who was killed for his godly deeds in pre-Christian Rome on February 14, AD 273.

The uncertainty about the identity of the *St Valentinus* in whose honour Valentine's Day is observed year after year itself raises suspicion. St Valentine could be a mythical figure after all. And sure that is the direction in which the true history of the day is pointing. Even if St Valentine was an actual historical figure, the day did not come about because of him; it predated him. His name was merely linked to the day to obscure its true pagan origins!

Valentine's Day is the old Roman pagan festival of *Lupercalia* repackaged for the modern world. The ancient Romans celebrated *Lupercalia* by exchanging cards (source of today's Valentine's cards!) in honour of the mighty hunter god *Lupercus*. The custom was to put the cards bearing the names of young women in a box and then the young men would randomly draw them out. The particular girl picked by a young man would become his sex partner for the coming year "beginning with the orgy that night of February 14".

It was not a day to commemorate platonic selfless love but a time to pair off sexual partners and to glamorize fornication!

Is Valentine's Day different today?

Nimrod-Cupid Free Love

Like other pagan festivals, such as Saturnalia (Christmas), *Lupercalia* was something of an international pagan festival, and its celebration extended beyond Rome. In Norse (Scandinavian) mythology, the star of the day—the arrow-bearing love boy—was *Vali*, the son of male deity Odin and goddess Rindr. He was represented as holding an archer with illuminating arrows bearing love. In Greece, he was *Eros*, the son of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. In Rome, he was *Cupid*, the round babyish boy striking an oval-shaped heart with an arrow, smiting the heart with his love. In Latin his name *Cupido* means "desire", with *Amor* as his alternate name—the origin of the English word "amorous"! Cupid is the consummate symbol of sensuality, carrying on the 'refined' image of a hunter of hearts, a diligent searcher of love and lovers!

The Cupid image takes us back to Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before the LORD" (Gen. 10:8-9). Nimrod is the fount of much of the world's pagan culture and idolatry, including sun-worship. Cupid is one of his numerous representations perpetuated to this day to draw men's hearts away from the living God.

So how did *Lupercalia* end up in the 'Christian' calendar?

The Church of Rome Re-christens Lupercalia

The pagan lovers' festival of *Lupercalia* was 'Christianized' and renamed St Valentine's Day by Pope Gelasius in 496 AD. He only effected a change of name. Valentine's Day still incorporated most of the pagan elements and practices of *Lupercalia*.

The celebration of Valentine's Day has not been sanitized to this day. Cards are exchanged for mostly romantic reasons. And so the candies and other gifts. This is the time of the year when condoms sell like hot cakes, and many shops run out of stock because of the unusually high demand for condoms.

Valentine's Day could easily pass for the most sexualized time of the year. Although some apologists insist that the essence of the day is to highlight the beauty of the platonic selfless love the mythical St Valentine demonstrated, the events of the day belie their position. The sensuous spirit of *Lupercus* too often predominates.

Valentine's Day is nowhere commanded in the scriptures. It is a myth. It's completely alien to the truth of scripture. It has found wide acceptance among Christians because the church-going public have itching ears and ministers to give those itching ears what they want to hear! They want their lusts subtly endorsed and faults overlooked—couched in pulpit stories in which sins are neither rebuked nor a serious call to repentance made. The congregation hates a 'judgmental' pulpit. Instead, a wishy-washy tale about Valentine is welcome.

The Higher Love of Heaven

Love is important, but true love is the love God teaches and exemplifies. Biblical love is a way of life in which selfless love and care characterize our day-to-day social interactions—not just on a special occasion and that devoted to the pursuit of sexual gratification. The true love from God is the love taught in 1 Cor. 13:4-8 and Lev. 19:9-18. It is demonstrable love proved with deeds; it's out-flowing, altruistic love; it's disinterested concern for the wellbeing of a fellow brother or sister. This is the sort of love God seeks to instill in each one of us; solid tangible love, not the myth of a love Valentine is!

Tolerate Sound Teaching!

As believers, we have been called to live by the sound doctrine, not the watery teachings of men that pander to the flesh. Christ, the Master, denounces all such teachings as empty making all our worship (based on them) equally vain (Matt. 15:9).

In this church we have not been taught myths but the saving truth of God, the commandments of life, the words of truth the Saviour describes as "Spirit and life" (John 6:63). As a church and as individual believers, we have witnessed the power of His truth. Let's hold fast on to it (1 Thess. 5:21).

Let's not resist the truth we have been taught and are being taught. Instead, let's yield to the discipline of the pure WORD. If at any time the preaching of the gospel makes you feel uncomfortable, it's a prod to make some necessary changes to your life in favour of righteousness. Consider it a divine rebuke and a reprimand to get on the straight and

narrow. The WORD will continue to knock the rough edges off our character until we attain perfection in Christ.

How we take the Word will determine how we will fare on the Day of Judgment. The LORD Jesus Christ will judge the living and the dead at His coming by the pure Word.

Preachers have a duty to preach the saving truth and listeners have a responsibility to themselves in the interests of their eternal salvation to tolerate the WORD, however harsh its rebuke. It's for our wellbeing and salvation – “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works!” Amen!