



The Good News

June 14th, 2020

Volume 20, Issue 17

“Please, sir, may I have some more?”

By Michael McCleary

At some point in our lives as Christians we will hear a sermon that “steps on our toes”. Hopefully, every sermon will in some way help us in our lives. However, there will be those sermons that hit us square in the face because some part of it applies specifically to us. The topic could be about anything, and the preacher may not have any idea that it steps on our toes, but sometimes as brethren we can get very upset when a sermon, and more specifically the application, causes us some hidden shame. Brethren can be very defensive and may complain to the preacher about the sermon or may speak negatively to other brethren about what the preacher said. The question we want to ask is how should I react when a sermon “steps on my toes”?

Is it Scriptural? – This should be the very first question we ask ourselves. If the preacher has said something that causes us some hidden shame, we ask ourselves if what he said comes from the Bible. The core of any application must have Scripture...otherwise there is no basis for an application. Once we determine that there is a basis for application, we must ask if the application is supported within the context and the spirit of the Scriptures. If there is no Scripture to back up what the preacher says, then we have an obligation to go to the preacher and ask where his Scripture comes from for making the application. However, if there is Scripture, and the application is supported within the context and spirit of the Scriptures, we must ask ourselves a new question.

How should I react to this? – There have been times when brethren have reacted rather badly to distinctive application made in sermons. There was a preacher who once preached a sermon on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, a sermon for which a visiting couple was present that were in an un-Scriptural relationship. This couple was terribly

upset afterwards and never attended the congregation again. They never approached the preacher to discuss the validity of the applications from Scripture which one could assume meant they recognized that it was what the Bible said. It was discovered later they began attending another congregation that did not care if their relationship was Scriptural. Did this couple react properly to the applications made by the preacher? I would suggest that they did not. They simply refused to apply the lesson to their lives and chose to go somewhere else that would not make an issue of it. When we are faced with application that comes directly from Scripture, we must be true to ourselves and true to God in accepting the truth and applying it to our lives. Getting angry or defensive about it will not change the word of God.

“Please, sir, may I have some more?” – The attitude we ought to have is one of respect for the word of God, being willing to apply His word to our lives, and even a desire to hear more sermons (or classes) that step on our toes. It is the preacher’s job to show how Scripture applies in everyday life and the listener’s job to execute the application in their life. We cannot “kill the messenger” just because we do not like what they say. This would make us no different than those who killed Christ. Rather we must understand the spirit with which sermons are taught – *“speaking the truth in love”* (**Eph. 4:15**). Paul asked the Galatians in **Gal. 4:16**, *“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”* Let us graciously accept the “stepping on of our toes” and even look forward to it...for the only way to make ourselves better servants to God and to each other is to be challenged to look at our life and truly make changes where they are needed.