



KEN LEGG MINISTRIES

QUALIFIED FOR EVERY BLESSING BECAUSE
OF THE FINISHED WORK OF JESUS

EXPOSITORY PREACHING & THE GRACE OF GOD

"There are many false gospels but there is only one true gospel, i.e. the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24; Gal.1:6). Many believe that doing certain things will get them more power - e.g. praying, fasting, giving, sacrificing, etc. But Paul said that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. If we believe the true gospel God's power will work in our lives.

No wonder then that the enemy has done all he can to distort the gospel message in order to keep God's people weak and ineffective. In fact the gospel of grace was already being corrupted in the New Testament Church. For example, as soon as Paul had established churches in the region of Galatia Judaizers followed after him teaching that grace and law must be combined. Paul said: 'Fall for that trick and you will fall from grace; the power of God will no longer work in you.'

But introducing the leaven of legalism is not the only way the gospel of grace was under siege. Some went in the opposite direction and turned it into licentiousness (Jude 4). Paul had to warn against this also (Rom.3:8; 6:1-2, 15-16).

What is the safeguard against error?

How can we ensure we do not fall into any of these traps? I believe that one of the things which helps protect us from error is expository teaching. Expository teaching is the practice of unfolding the truth of passages or sections of the Bible systematically, verse by verse. This brings a well-rounded presentation of Scripture over a period of time and is much more likely to expose a congregation to the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim.3:16).

Expository preaching was used almost exclusively in the first centuries of the Christian Church. Other forms of teaching were virtually unknown. It fell into decline during the Dark Ages but was revived by the Reformers. Sadly, today, other forms of preaching such as topical sermons, motivational talks, pop-psychology and a variety of fads and strange doctrines have replaced expository teaching. This has opened the way for many unfortunate trends in the church. For example, eisegesis has replaced exegesis. Exegesis is to expound the Word so as to let its true meaning naturally come forth. Eisegesis is to come to the Word with a preconceived idea or agenda and try to read that thought into the Scripture. Sadly this happens regularly in many churches each week as pastors share their 'vision' (agenda) and raid the Bible to find a text to hang it on.

Expository teaching bears lasting fruit

Departure from expository preaching has left us with much bad fruit including Biblically illiterate Christians, a growing demand for counselling, exploitation (rather than exposition) of the Scriptures, an inability to detect false teaching, etc.

Conversely, a return to expository teaching will result in many positive benefits. For example preaching will major on majors and minor on minors, sensitive and difficult subjects which are normally avoided will be addressed, congregations will become more grounded in the Word, believers will be set free by the truth and generally become more sound and established in their faith (most error arises from texts which are taken out of their context or when essential truths are not taught).

Expository preaching and the gospel of grace

Getting back to the gospel of grace, two tendencies seem apparent in the church today. First, the fundamental truth concerning the believer's identity in Christ is not being taught. It would seem that many preachers are totally unacquainted with the positional truths as taught by Paul, for example in the first chapters of his epistles to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, etc. Therefore sermons are always focused on behaviour modification, i.e. how we should live and behave. Such preaching generally tends towards legalism and condemnation.



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But then there are some grace preachers who are so afraid of legalism that there is never any instruction or exhortation in their preaching. They basically teach passivity and in doing so dis-empower the very people God has empowered for life and godliness.

I liken both these approaches to trying to cut a piece of paper with one blade of a pair of scissors. Scissors are only effective when both blades close against each other to produce a cutting effect. When Paul taught the gospel of grace he used the 'two blade' approach. First he taught the wonderful truths of our new creation identity in Christ. Then he exhorts us to bring forth, through faith, the new life that we now have in Christ.

Expository preaching would ensure that both blades are used and that there is a cutting edge to our ministry.

Here is an example of this. When we commenced our ministry in Africa in 2006 it became clear that the greatest need in the churches there was for sound teaching. There were so many extra-biblical teachings which were holding people in bondage and causing havoc. In response to this we set up approximately 35 DVD Schools of Ministry in several nations teaching the gospel of grace by expounding parts of the New Testament (this is also available in Australia under the name of Leggacy). Many leaders have been dramatically changed through this process. The gospel of grace not only says things, it does things; and when the whole counsel of the gospel is preached it transforms lives. There are now more than 350 Schools of Ministry in Africa.

Expository preaching resists the temptation to go for quick-fix results. It takes more time, but it bears lasting fruit.

Ken Legg