

GOD'S WISDOM vs. MAN'S WISDOM¹

Text: I Cor. 1:1-4:21

INTRODUCTION:

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in a different era and setting (at the AGM [Annual General Meeting] of the Evangelical Library in Great Britain in 1964) made some very wise observations which are perhaps even more relevant to biblical Christianity today:

“There is going to be a time of real sifting amongst us, and there are indications even in these present days that the sifting is going on. A number of men are becoming dissatisfied. They are obeying their consciences and they are taking action. If there is to be a period of yet greater sifting (and I venture to suggest there will be) well then, it will be of inestimable value to be able to read what men in past centuries did under the guidance and inspiration of the Spirit in their similar new situations.”²

“...a situation has developed, and is continuing to develop, in which the whole question of the meaning of ‘evangelical’ has been thrown again into the melting pot. We must be sure and certain that we know exactly what we mean... Why is this necessary?”

*“Well, my first answer would be that... the church throughout the centuries, shows very clearly that **there is nothing static in the life of the church. There is always a process of change and development, and unfortunately, as is true of nature, the process is generally one of degeneration.** This, of course, is one of the main results of sin and of the fall... In the New Testament you already see heresy, false teaching arising, subtle changes taking place with regard to what the Christian truth really is...*

*“Nor is this all. **There is something further to point out as we look at the history of the church throughout the centuries. It is that this process of change is never a sudden one. It is always a subtle and slow process.** You remember our Lord’s own comparison about moth and rust. Rusting is a very slow process... There were, of course men who were very extreme and who made bold statements... they did not do the harm. They never do the harm. The obvious, open, arrogant heretic generally produces a reaction, and he is not the dangerous person. The really dangerous man is the man who introduces some very slight or very subtle change... Now this is the sort of man who has generally done the greatest harm because, to all appearances, and if you looked simply on the surface, you could not see any change at all... I want to suggest that we are confronted today by this selfsame process and that even in the last ten years (1963!) a very serious situation has arisen... My whole contention is that for us to assume that because we have once said that we are evangelical (or fundamentalist-mwe), therefore we must still be ...now and shall always be, is not only to misread the teaching of the New Testament, but to fail completely to grasp and to understand the great lessons which are taught us so clearly by history...*

*“**This kind of change has another characteristic** and this again has been proved from New Testament times right down to this day. **At the beginning the changes generally take place on the periphery (outer boundary) and not at the center ...** You do not find men suddenly making different statements about certain central truths; the difference begins with something right on the outside. And because the change generally begins there, some people argue that there has been no change at all... But no, although change may begin somewhere outside, on the circumference, that is the serious aspect of the matter, for this reason, that Christian truth is one. It is the glory of the Christian truth that it has many parts, but they are all interrelated...and the result is that if you make what appears to be a minor change somewhere to the circumference it will soon have its effect even upon the center.”³*

¹ Sermon by Rev. Mike Edwards, first preached at Goroka Baptist Church, Goroka, Papua New Guinea on 10 August, 2003, and subsequently at several other locations in PNG (Grace Baptist, Pt. Moresby-11/03; Bethel Baptist Men’s Retreat, Lae-10/03; Goroka Baptist Bible College chapel, Goroka-9&10/03; The annual Independent Baptist Pastors Conference, Kundiawa, Chimbu-9/03), as well as in various churches and schools in the USA, Jamaica & St. Vincent, West Indies. Email: mike.edwards876@gmail.com Mike was youth pastor at Bible Baptist Church, Madison, Ohio from 1975-1982 & pastor from July 2013-June 2021. (revised 1/18)

² *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones: The Fight of Faith, 1939-1981*, Iain H. Murray. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, Scotland, 1990, p. 425.

³ *Knowing the Times-Addresses Delivered on Various Occasions, 1942-1977*, “What is An Evangelical?”, by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, Scotland, 1989, pp. 300-305.

❖ MARKS OF MAN'S WISDOM

1. SLAVISH DEVOTION AND LOYALTY TO PERSONALITIES, LEADERS, & ORGANIZATIONS. 1:12-16; 3:3-9 & 3:21-4:6

Illustrations:

A week long missions conference where pastors traveled from 100 miles or more in 3 different directions-not to hear the missionaries, since they did almost nothing the entire week-but to hear a very well-known preacher/educator, who had been brought in to be the speaker for the conference, and who publicly recognized those pastors, gave them free books for coming, etc.

The use of names like Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, or Robert Schuller, often seems to shut off all discussion and debate, simply by the calling of their names.

QUOTE from Dr. Francis Schaeffer:

*"...we can also say something about the attitude of loyalty. Loyalty in the Church of Christ should be in an increasing scale. To reverse the scale is to destroy the Church. **The primary loyalty must be to God as God, on a personal level.** This is personal loyalty to the person of the living God, and it is essential and first, above all other loyalties. So strongly do I feel this that I would put the second loyalty in a decreasing scale; loyalty to the principles of revealed Christianity. It is not that I would separate these principles of revealed Christianity from the personal God, but rather that it is because they are from him that they have any authority.*

*"Third in importance is loyalty to organizations, not because they have been called Church organizations and have historical continuity for a certain number of years, centuries, or millennia, but only as far as they are biblically faithful. Below this, in fourth place, must be that which is often put first, and that is loyalty to human leadership. **It must be kept in its proper order. To reverse the order is to be totally destructive.** If loyalty to human leadership becomes central, we tend to show loyalty not even to our own organization (which would be horribly limited in itself) but to our own little party within the organization. But if, on the other hand, we keep our eyes on loyalty to the personal God, as our 'first love,' we will tend to love, on a practical level, all those who are Christ's."*⁴

2. A DESIRE FOR SIGNS, WONDERS, AND OTHER EXTERNAL MANIFESTATIONS. 1:22

Peter Wagner, Fuller Theological Seminary has stated: *"The simple gospel, without signs and wonders, is not sufficient to bring people to Christ."*⁵

Compare the above statement with the fact that Jesus did more signs and miracles than anyone in history, yet they rejected Him! In one instance, the people showed they were more concerned for their pigs than that a demon-possessed man had been delivered (Mt. 8:32-34). And Jesus, far from using signs and miracles as a powerful "tool" for the gospel, sometimes even forbade people who were healed from telling others (Mt. 8:3-4; 9:29-31). In addition, Jesus rebuked those people that were crying out for signs and miracles, and said that *"an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the 'whale's' belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* (Mt. 12:38-40 cf. Mt. 11:20-24: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes..." cf. Mt. 16:1-4). Jn 12:37-38 states: *"But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, 'Lord, who hath believed our report?...'"* Interestingly, according to Scripture, John the Baptist performed no signs (Jn. 10:41), yet Christ said *"Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist..."!* (Mt. 11:11).

⁴ *"True Spirituality,"* Francis A. Schaeffer. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, IL, 1971, p. 173.

⁵ Quoted by Dr. John MacArthur, Jr. on his two tape series: *"The Sufficiency of the Scriptures."*

3. THE PURSUIT AND USE OF THE WORLD'S WISDOM. 1:22.

a. MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES & AN EMPHASIS ON "PROFESSIONALISM."

SCHOLARSHIP ALONE MEANS NOTHING, & CAN EVEN BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE:

Tertullian: *"What has Jerusalem to do with Athens? What has the temple to do with the porch and the academy?"*

MLJ went on to comment:

"Every reformation has always expressed a distrust of reason and of philosophy... (Tertullian) had, as you know, joined the Montanists, who were in rebellion against the tendencies to become subservient to Greek philosophy that had come into the church. I suggest to you that nothing is more important in our present situation than just this one particular point. Philosophy has always been the cause of the church going astray, for philosophy means, ultimately, a trusting to human reason and human understanding... The apostle's whole contention (in I Cor. 1-4) is that things were going wrong in Corinth because they were beginning to bring back faith in human wisdom, philosophy..."

"Martin Luther used to refer to 'that old witch, Lady Reason'... He was concerned about this, of course, because it was of the essence of his argument against Rome. It is true still that the trouble with Roman Catholicism is that they say that they believe the Bible. Let us grant that they do, and that they are quite sincere in saying that, but what, then, is the trouble? The trouble is that they have added Aristotelian philosophy on to their belief in the Bible, and that ultimately they are interpreting the Bible in terms of Aristotelian philosophy. This is the great characteristic of the Summa of Thomas Aquinas... I mention just now the Puritans in England, and they are a very good illustration of this same point. The great controversy between the Puritans and the Church of England was very largely an argument over the place of reason..."

"This tendency has kept on recurring, and that is why I think it is so important for us, because I believe it is happening again now."

*"Let me state it still more bluntly by putting it to you like this, that the true evangelical is not only distrustful of reason, but he is also distrustful of scholarship... What do I mean? Let me try to make it plain. The (Bible-believer) starts from the Scriptures. He also reads the history of the church, and there he finds that the history proves what has been emphasized in the Scripture, that when men trust to reason and to understanding they go astray... The sum of all I am saying is that the (Bible-believer) distrusts scholarship and is watchful of it. That does not mean that he is anti-intellectual; it does not mean that he becomes obscurantist; but it does mean that he keeps reason and scholarship in their place. They are servants and not masters... My contention is that the (Bible-believer), while he realizes the danger of reason and scholarship, is not afraid of them. He does not run and hide, and just turn in on himself and the enjoyment of his own feelings. No, he is aware of scholarship, he meets it on its own level, but he does not submit himself to it. **He does not go down on his knees because some man is a great scholar. He knows that the great scholar, even the great scholar in the Bible, may be an unbeliever, so he does not worship the scholar...***

*"The big principle that I would lay down is this, that in the attitude of the evangelical to reason and scholarship he is fully aware of the danger for he sees it so clearly in the Scripture. Paul becomes 'a fool', laughed at by the philosophers. They regarded his teaching as utter foolishness. This has always happened to the true Christian; it happens today. **It is not surprising that the so-called great philosophers are skeptics and infidels. We should expect them to be, and we should not be frightened because they are.** We should not apologize for the faith because they are not Christian. **Rather we should see that this is a proof of the teaching of the Scripture;** and we remember that when the church has gone down into the trough, in her dearest periods, it has invariably been when she has become subservient to philosophy..."*

“Coming to more recent times, and to our own times, is it not a simple fact to say that the real damage to the life of the church in the last two centuries has been done mainly by theological seminaries? Is not that where the trouble has arisen? It has not arisen in the churches...Men who have felt called to the ministry and been recommended by churches for ministerial training have gone into the seminaries as evangelicals and true evangelists, and they have come out denying everything, sometimes even departing from the faith altogether. If that has not happened, they have come out dead, trying to be scholars and having lost the edge of their zeal and their enthusiasm. Therefore, if (a Bible believer) is not distrustful of reason and of scholarship, he is not only failing to understand the teaching of the Scripture; he is blind to this clear testimony of the history of the Christian church throughout the centuries... the ‘new evangelicalism’, and so on, are concerned with scholarship, in my opinion, in the wrong sense. This is a part of evangelicalism’s inferiority complex. We want to be considered intellectual and respectable, and in doing that we are in grave danger of submitting ourselves to philosophy, to reason, and to scholarship, and it will lead to the same result with us as it has in the case of those who have gone before us.”⁶

ILLUSTRATIONS OF PROFESSIONALISM:

- (1) **Bobb Biehl’s “Masterplanning” Strategic Planning Methodology.** In his scenario, You think up the “needs” that you think people have. Next you call them God’s concerns. Then finally you are told to pray that you’ll be “burdened for the things that burden the heart of God!” There is an almost complete ignoring of Scripture in the entire “Master-Planning Arrow” process.
- (2) **Psychological Personality Testing/Profiling.** Typically individuals take a test, some of which can be completed in as little as 4-5 minutes. You then randomly divide people into four (or whatever number) types of people-with no real justification. With the DISC test you typically check off (tick) which one of four descriptive words in twenty-four groups of four you think best describes yourself. Supposedly that reveals what personality type you are, how you will react to various situations, how others can “read” you (e.g. D.I.S.C.), etc. There is no biblical basis for it, since Scripture never speaks of four temperaments or types. There is nothing scientific about it either. The answers you give one day may differ from the ones you give on another day, depending on your mood-with the result that you can be categorized as one thing one day, and another thing the next!⁷ And it also often becomes a way for people to excuse their own, or another person’s, failures and misbehavior.

Dr. Wayne Mack has commented: *“...The National Association of Nouthetic Counselors (NANC)... **believe they are unnecessary, useless and can be misleading**... What did Paul and others do in choosing church leaders without these tests? They had their way of evaluating (Acts 16:3; I Timothy 3, 2 Cor. 3, etc) people for ministry. I’m sure the intent of the people who are pushing these tests is a good one... Even so, I don’t think this is the best or biblical way to do it. Most of the most popular tests were developed by unbelievers using unbiblical norms and standards... In addition to all this, **these tests are so subjective... that the way people answer them one day may be different from the way they answer them at another time and in another situation**...”⁸*

Another well respected Christian counselor has said: *“Personality tests are questionable at best, since: 1) They may or may not be accurate; 2) What is accurate in one setting may not apply to others,... 3) They assume that all people can be divided into 4 (or whatever) types of people... In a nutshell: I would NOT use them... **they are at best unnecessary distractions, that point people toward secular psychology, and continue to shift the focus away from Scripture.**”⁹*

⁶ *Knowing the Times*, op cit., pp. 324-329.

⁷ A recent illustration of this occurred a few months ago when I was personally told of someone I know, who took such a test one day and after it was scored, he was told he was a particular personality type. However he was subsequently told that he needed to retake the test since he should have answered the questions not just as he would in reference to his workday/workplace environment, but in general. He took the test again, and this time it said he was a completely different personality type!

⁸ Email received from Dr. Wayne Mack, President, Strengthening Ministries International, and adjunct professor at The Master’s Seminary, email dated 15 January, 2003, copy on file.

⁹ Email received from Dr. Greg Mazak, Chairman, Division of Psychology & Counseling, Bob Jones University, email dated 26 November, 2002, copy on file.

- (3) **“Situational Leadership®” & “Situational Leadership II®/Lead Like Jesus.”** The entire framework and philosophy behind this management/leadership theory comes from unsaved, bankrupt, secular sources such as Carl Rogers, Ohio State University, the University of Michigan, & Douglas McGregor. Paul Hersey created it. You “read” people in order to “influence” (manipulate?) them to be more productive and do what you want them to do. Its division of people into four types is biblically and scientifically groundless. Its speakers and board members are a hodge-podge of New Evangelicals and worse. Furthermore Scripture, including Jesus, present no such methodology unless one reads into the text what is not there. In fact the Bible presents a very different way of leading people, i.e. directive, straightforward, confrontational when necessary, and utterly honest and truthful.¹⁰

The changing responsibilities and “profile” of the pastor! “...in a massive study in 1934, pastors were said to have five distinct roles—**teacher, preacher, pastor, leader, and administrator**. These roles are notable for being few in number and biblical in content. But in another huge study in 1980, involving forty-seven denominations, evidence showed that the pastor’s profile both expanded and grew more secular. Pastors were expected to be **open, affirming, able to foster relationships, experienced in facilitating discussion, and so on**. The new premium was on skills in interpersonal relationships and conflict management. Biblical and spiritual criteria of ministry were notably optional. Yet another study in 1986 showed that the differences in expectations between liberals and evangelicals had almost disappeared, that secular expectations grew while the spiritual shrunk, and that the profile was largely dominated by two sets of considerations—those therapeutic and managerial.”¹¹

INSTRUCTIVE QUOTES:

Evidence of this tragic shift towards “*professionalism*” is seen in the following comment related by Os Guinness: “...a Japanese businessman (said) to a visiting Australian: ‘**Whenever I meet a Buddhist leader, I meet a holy man. Whenever I meet a Christian leader, I meet a manager.**’”¹²

“**Modernity’s replacement of ‘top down’ God-centered living with ‘bottom up’ human-centered living represents a titanic revolution in human history and experience.**”¹³ “...one eminent Christian leader returned home from a church-growth conference puzzled. **There had been ‘literally no theology,’ he said. ‘In fact, there had been no serious reference to God at all.**”¹⁴

PROFESSIONALISM A BANE, NOT A BLESSING:

John Piper, writing in a book he has titled “*Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*” has made some powerful statements in regard to the “professionalism” and management emphasis that is coming into the pastoral ministry: “*The title (‘Brothers, we are not professionals’)...is meant to shake us loose from the pressure to fit into the cultural expectations of professionalism. It is meant to sound an alarm against the pride of station and against the expectation of parity in pay and against the borrowing of paradigms from the professional world. Oh for radically Bible-saturated, God-centered, Christ-exalting, self-sacrificing, mission-mobilizing, soul-saving, culture-confronting pastors! Let the chips fall where they will: palm branches one day, persecution the next... We could wish for peace. And we should labor for unity in the truth. But in this fallen world the gospel is always the aroma of life for some and the aroma of death for others (2 Cor. 2:15-16) ...The peace and satisfaction of our aching souls-and our hungry churches and waiting nations-flow not from the perks of professional excellence, but from the pleasures of spiritual communion with the crucified and risen Christ... ‘Brothers, we are not professionals.’*”¹⁵

SO WHAT’S WRONG WITH BEING PROFESSIONAL? Piper explains succinctly:

“*We pastors are being killed by the professionalizing of the pastoral ministry. The mentality of the professional is not the mentality of the prophet. It is not the mentality of the slave of Christ. Professionalism has nothing to do*

¹⁰ For a full biblical critique of Situational Leadership® & the currently popular “Lead Like Jesus” adaption of this secular management theory, see my 26 page paper “*A Biblical Critique of Situational Leadership® II/Lead Like Jesus.*” (Feb. 05).

¹¹ “*Dining With the Devil.*” Os Guinness. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1993, pp. 52-53. For more thorough documentation of this, and a fuller treatment of these monumental shifts, see “*No Place For Truth, or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology.*” by David Wells. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, MI, 1993.

¹² “*Dining With the Devil.*” op cit., p. 49.

¹³ Ibid, p. 42.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 53.

¹⁵ *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, John Piper. Broadman & Holman: Nashville, TN, 2002, pp. xii-xiii.

with the essence and heart of the Christian ministry. The more professional we long to be, the more spiritual death we will leave in our wake. For there is no professional childlikeness (Matt. 18:3); there is no professional tenderheartedness (Eph. 4:32); there is no professional panting after God (Ps. 42:1). But our first business is to pant after God in prayer. Our business is to weep over our sins (James 4:9). Is there professional weeping? Our business is...to deny ourselves and take up the blood-spattered cross daily (Luke 9:23). How do you carry a cross professionally? ... (and) wonder of wonders, we were given the gospel treasure to carry in clay pots to show that the transcendent power belongs to God (2 Cor. 4:7). Is there a way to be a professional clay pot?

“Brothers, we are not professionals! We are outcasts. We are aliens and exiles in the world (1 Pet. 2:11). Our citizenship is in heaven, and we wait with eager expectation for the Lord (Phil. 3:20). You cannot professionalize the love for His appearing without killing it. And it is being killed. **The aims of our ministry are eternal and spiritual. They are not shared by any of the professions.** It is precisely by the failure to see this that we are dying...

“We are most emphatically not part of a social team sharing goals with other professionals. Our goals are an offense; they are foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23). **The professionalization of the ministry is constant threat to the offense of the gospel. It is a threat to the profoundly spiritual nature of our work.** I have seen it often: the love of professionalism (parity among the world’s professionals) kills a man’s belief that he is sent by God to save people from hell and to make them Christ-exalting, spiritual aliens in the world.

“**The world sets the agenda of the professional man; God sets the agenda of the spiritual man.** The strong wine of Jesus Christ explodes the wineskins of professionalism. There is an infinite difference between the pastor whose heart is set on being a professional and the pastor whose heart is set on being the aroma of Christ, the fragrance of death to some and eternal life to others (2 Cor. 2:15-16).

“God deliver us from the professionalizers! Deliver us from the ‘low, managing, contriving, maneuvering temper of mind among us.’ God give us tears for our sins. Forgive us for being so shallow in prayer, so thin in our grasp of holy verities, so content amid perishing neighbors, so empty of passion and earnestness in all our conversation. Restore to us the childlike joy of our salvation. Frighten us with the awesome holiness and power of Him who can cast both soul and body into hell (Mt. 10:28)... **Grant us nothing, absolutely nothing, the way the world views it.** May Christ be all in all (Col. 3:11).¹⁶

b. **PRAGMATISM.** i.e. “**If it works, it must be right.**” This way of thinking and acting is also known as the “**Jesuit Philosophy**” i.e. “**The End Justifies the Means.**”

- (1) **Rom. 3:8 condemns such thinking.**
- (2) **If right and wrong is determined by “results” then Moses was a grand success when he struck the rock the second time in Numbers 20. –Not hardly!**
- (3) **One should look at ALL the results, not just the ones that support what a pragmatist is trying to justify.**

ILLUSTRATIONS:

The pastor of a 7,000 member church in Florida: “**I must be doing right or things wouldn’t be going so well.**”¹⁷

The song “**Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus**”, done *jazz/nightclub* style, in the morning service of an independent Baptist church we attended in 2002 in Dayton, Ohio.

c. **MAJOR CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SHIFT TO MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES, “PROFESSIONALIZATION”, & MARKETING, IN REGARD TO MINISTRY:**

- (1) **A Shift to “Others Directedness”, as opposed to an emphasis on accomplishments and character.** On the surface, being “*others-oriented*” sounds like the essence of the biblical idea of being a servant to others. However the modern-day concept of being

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 1-4.

¹⁷ *Dining with the Devil*, op cit., p. 38.

“*others-directed*” has subtly come to take on a meaning quite different from the biblical one. It appears to be an interest in others, but can easily turn out to be an interest in others only in order to get people on our side, or to do what we want. Terms like “*insincerity*,” “*manipulation*,” & “*being used*,” come to mind. Yet when practiced, it is done under the guise of being “*others-oriented*.” In discussing this postmodern practice, Guinness has said that one is reminded of Mark Twain’s famous quote: “*The secret to success is sincerity. If you can fake that, you’ve got it made.*”¹⁸

- (2) **Changes in the Christian Publishing Industry**. “In 1983, James Hunter published the results of his analysis of the eight most prolific evangelical presses. He found that 87.8 percent of the titles published dealt with subjects related to the self, its discovery and nurture, and the resolution of its problems and tensions. The remaining 12.2 percent of the titles published had to carry the rest of the cargo.”¹⁹
- (3) **Changes in the sermons now being preached**. In checking two important preaching journals, it was found that... “*The overwhelming proportion of the sermons analyzed—more than 80 percent—were anthropocentric (man-centered)... less than half (were) explicitly biblical, and a significant number (were) not discernibly Christian at all. They could have been given by a secular psychologist in a setting like the Rotary Club.*”²⁰
- (4) **World culture is now defining skill & proficiency in the ministry** (and wrongly, in my opinion—*mwe*). The key word again is “*Professionalization*.” Wells has wisely remarked: “*It is not management that the Church needs, but reformation, and reformation does not compel the professionalized.*”²¹ In another place Wells convincingly demonstrates that evangelicalism and fundamentalism, in its eager and undiscerning pursuit of “*professionalization*” is actually following the path that liberalism followed to its own destruction and irrelevance 50-75 years ago!²²
- (5) **A serious De-emphasis on the Bible and Theology is Occurring**. There are two distinct and very different models being followed in the Church today. “*In the one model, theology is foundational, and in the other it is only peripheral... Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, and Carl Henry all believed that their theology was ‘biblical,’ but the sense in which each did so was quite different, and hence the way in which Scripture functioned to authorize their theologies was quite different* (to say the least—*mwe*).”²³ Guinness has wisely remarked: “*The Church of Christ is more than spiritual and theological, but never less. Only when first things are truly first, over even the best and most attractive second things, will the church be free of idols.*”²⁴
- (6) **An inordinate and uncritical effort is being made to be “Relevant.”** cf. “*Seeker-friendly*,” “*Audience-driven*,” “*Purpose-driven*,” “*Full-service churches*,” etc.

A humorous example: “*Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, That saved a stunted self-concept like me; I once was stressed out, but now am empowered, was visually challenged, but now I see.*”²⁵

The number one danger of a preoccupation with being relevant is that it leads to compromise.²⁶ “*Scripture and history are also clear: Without maintaining critical*

¹⁸ *Time For Truth*, Os Guinness (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI, 2000), p. 41.

¹⁹ *No Place For Truth, or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology*, op cit., pp. 175-176.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 251-252.

²¹ Wells, op cit., pp. 256-257.

²² *Ibid*, pp. 237-238; 253-254.

²³ *Ibid*, pp. 218-219; 122.

²⁴ Guinness, op cit., p. 39.

²⁵ Wells, op cit., quoting Doug Marlette, p. 137.

²⁶ Guinness, op cit., pp. 56-57.

tension, the principle of identification is a recipe for compromise and capitulation. It is no accident that the charge of being ‘all things to all people’ has become a popular synonym for compromise... **For a start, many ‘seeker-friendly’ churches have quite deliberately subordinated both worship and discipleship to evangelism, and evangelism to entertainment, and in the process subverted the traditional defining features of the church...** What does it say of the church when Newsweek can note that ‘the least demanding churches are now in greatest demand’? Or when one church can advertise: **‘Instead of me fitting a religion, I found a religion to fit me’?**²⁷

“...a constant appeal to relevance becomes a way of riding roughshod over truth and corraling opinion coercively... (whereas) truth, in fact, gives relevance to ‘relevance,’ just as ‘relevance’ becomes irrelevance if it is not related to truth... ‘To be always relevant, you have to say things which are eternal.’”²⁸

Dr. Les Ollila has made similar prescient observations, stating that **“If you wed yourself to this age, you’ll be a widower”** & **“You will always be relevant if you speak eternal truth.”**²⁹

- (7) **It is producing, by necessity, a rising emphasis on specialization on peripheral** (i.e. secondary) **matters and techniques**. **“...if a minister wants both to claim a monopoly over some part of the work and to respect the assumption of the congregation that it knows something about its own faith, he or she will almost certainly have to become a specialist in matters that are frankly peripheral to the life of faith—such matters as church administration, denominational politics, psychological counseling, and the like.”**³⁰
- (8) **Church & Missions methodology based on and centered in management and psychology has other miscellaneous weaknesses**. One man has noted that “these two types—the psychologist and the manager—model the essential interests of twentieth (& 21st) century culture. Both types are:
- a. “This-worldly [as opposed to ‘other-worldly’ or ‘heavenly minded’-*mwe*],
 - b. “Both are centered on the autonomous individual [i.e. focused on the self],
 - c. “Both are driven by pragmatic interests [i.e. whatever works (see below)], and
 - d. “Both are hostile to the old moral order.”³¹
- (9) **A Professional/Management emphasis leads to dominance by the “Expert(s)”, and a dependency by the majority**. So now we see appearing in the church the experts, i.e. “consultants,” “pundits,” “marketers,” “therapists,” etc. **“The result, however, is not necessarily greater freedom and responsibility for ordinary people, because the dominance of the expert means the dependency of the client. All that has changed is the type of authority... The suggestion is that ‘The expert knows best,’ so ‘we can do better.’ But the ‘ministry of all believers recedes once again... In most cases, all that has changed is the type of clergy. The old priesthood is dead! Long live the new power-pastors and pundit-priests!... over-reliance on pundits leads Christians toward disregard for the specifically Christian content of the expertise. In the case of the Christian pundit, for example, a dazzling grasp of modern data and information often obscures a striking blind spot—his or her lack of attention to theological discernment or to matters of wisdom, responsibility, and character, which in Scripture far outweigh the importance of information.”**³²

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 28, 79-80.

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 62-64.

²⁹ Judi Coats, *A Man Among Them: The Les Ollila Story* (privately published, 2004), pp. 67 & 101

³⁰ *No Place For Truth*, op cit., p. 247.

³¹ Wells, op cit., p. 114.

³² Guinness, op cit., pp. 69-72.

- (10) **It has a negative effect on preaching.** This was documented earlier, but I would like to include another statement: *“If preaching, like the ministry, is now defined by the needs of the Church rather than the fabric of truth in the Bible, should (a decline in solid preaching) be a surprising discovery?... the World Council of Churches’ dictum in 1966 (was), ‘The world must set the agenda for the Church.’ (!) ... it is also worth checking to see whether there are similar inanities in the church-growth movement today.”*³³
- (11) **Biblical Standards, and those who advocate them, are belittled and called “Legalistic,” while those who “Affirm Others” are elevated and commended.** Wells makes a very interesting observation in regard to the ministry. When theology is jettisoned in favor of interpersonal and management skills as it has been today, those who “affirm” others are prized, and those who seek to maintain standards in matters of truth and ethics, are looked down upon: *“...professional demeanor weighs more heavily than does theological ability. According to the Schuller study (the huge, 1980 survey of 47 denominations-mwe) the most desired clerical quality (was) an ‘open, affirming’ style, and that which (was) the most abhorred (was) as style marked by ‘legalism’ in matters of truth and ethics, a style that excludes the participation of others, or is domineering... the minister’s authority and professional status rides not on his or her character, ability to expound the Word of God, or theological skill in relating that Word to the contemporary world, but on interpersonal skills, administrative talents, and ability to organize the community... where professionalization is at work, there the ministry will typically be deprived of its transcendence and reduced to little more than a helping profession... It is the kind of sentimentality that wants to listen without judging, that has opinions but little interest in truth, that is sympathetic but has no passion for that which is right. It is under this guise of piety-indeed, of professionalization-that pastoral unbelief lives out its life.”*³⁴
- (12) **A Major Problem: Truth becomes “fluid,” “flexible,” “redefined,” or lost altogether.** This is of course, a major mark of Postmodernism. Unfortunately it has swept into churches, denominations, Christian schools and mission boards as well. People creating their own truth and “spinning/twisting” things to fit the need of the moment or to cover themselves. People, including some Christian leaders, tell falsehoods with a straight face. But in today’s postmodern society, that is considered ok.
- (13) **Another danger of “Professionalism” is that we run the danger of becoming knowledgeable and skilled, yet at the same time dead and dry spiritually!** *“The good is often the enemy of the best, and the sure road to unbelief is not rebellion, but forgetfulness...modernity may confer on us a training, expertise, sophistication and track record that would be the envy of previous generations of the faith. We may even appear to have exceeded the greatest exploits of the apostles and of the times of revival. But this is still only by God’s grace... When all is said and done, what matters is not that we see Satan fall and church membership rise, but that our names are written in heaven. Nothing more poignant could be said of this generation than that our church planting was illustrious but we lost our first love. There is only one real question, writes Henri Nouwen, ‘The question is not: How many people take you seriously? How much are you going to accomplish? Can you show some results? But: Are you in love with Jesus?’”*³⁵

Spurgeon wisely stated: *“If we think that we shall do more good by substituting another exhortation for the gospel command, we shall find ourselves landed in serious difficulties. If, for a moment, our improvements seem to produce a larger result than the old gospel, it will be the growth of mushrooms, it may even be the growth of toadstools; but*

³³ Ibid, pp. 58-59.

³⁴ Wells, op cit., pp. 234, 249.

³⁵ Guinness, op cit., pp. 42, 86-87.

it is not the growth of trees of the Lord. Let us keep close to Christ as our infallible Teacher in these days of peril, and be exceedingly jealous of the truth, else we may be duped, as Pompey tricked certain cities that would not admit his troops... Keep out the little errors for which sympathy is asked; or, if not, your citadel will be captured before you are aware of the attack. Stand fast in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, and let no man spoil you by philosophy and vain deceit.”³⁶

4. **A DEPRECIATING OF PREACHING AS THE VEHICLE TO IMPACT LIVES FOR CHRIST. 1:18, 21, 23, 25, 27.** Preaching is now being replaced by “*Worship Teams*”, “*Dance Teams*”, **worldly music/ etc.** Drama and monologues are regularly occurring in place of preaching. Or we see an hour of singing followed by a brief 15 minute “*sermonette.*” One has commented: “...we fall foul of the charge leveled by rock star Michael Been of The Call: ‘*Everything that goes on in every major corporation goes on inside the church, except as a sideline the Church teaches religion.*’”³⁷ What a grievous indictment!

❖ **MARKS OF GOD’S WISDOM.**

1. **GOD’S WISDOM IS CENTERED ON CHRIST AND THE CROSS. 1:17-18, 24, 30; 2:2, 8.** Today, sermons, lessons, and ministries are centered on the “*self.*” Dave Hunt has described Eve’s focus as, “*I, My, Me.*” But godly wisdom preaches Christ and the Cross, i.e. Christ’s substitutionary atonement; the resurrection of Christ; The utter sinfulness and depravity of man; etc.

“SELF-ESTEEM” ILLUSTRATIONS:

Robert Schuller: “*Christ died to sanctify your self esteem, and He will sanctify the ego trip.*” NO HE WON’T! Schuller is all about “*Self Esteem, Self Love & Self Image.*” “*Self-esteem is... the single greatest need facing the human race today.*”³⁸ He says that the New Reformation he envisions, “will focus on ‘*the sacred right of every person to self-esteem.*’ His rationale is as follows: ‘*If you want to know why Schuller smiles on television; if you want to know why I make people laugh once in a while, I’m giving them sounds and strokes, sounds and strokes [like you would a baby]. It’s strategy. People who don’t trust need to be stroked. People are born with a negative self-image. Because they do not trust, they cannot trust God.*’”³⁹

Schuller: “*Sin is any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem.*” “*What is hell?*” *It is the loss of pride that naturally follows separation from God... a person is in hell when he has lost his self-esteem.*”(sic)
“If the gospel of Jesus Christ can be proclaimed as a theology of self-esteem, imagine the health this could generate on planet earth.”
“To be born again means that we must be changed from a negative to a positive self-image—from inferiority to self-esteem.”
“What does it mean to be saved? It means to be permanently lifted from sin and shame to self-esteem.”⁴⁰(sic)

By contrast, David Wells has correctly said that **in the fairly recent past “Schuller’s ministry...might have been viewed not as Christian ministry at all, but as comedy.** *Would it not be possible to view him as providing a biting parody of American self-absorption? Sin, he says with a cherubic smile, is not what shatters our relationship with God; the true culprit is the jaundiced eye that we have turned on ourselves. The problem is that we do not esteem ourselves enough. In the Crystal Cathedral, therefore, let the word sin be banished, whether in song, Scripture or prayer. There is never any confession there. Then again, Christ was not drawing a profound moral compass in the Sermon on the Mount; he was just giving us a set of ‘be (happy) attitudes.’ The word was, don’t worry, be happy. And God is not so mean as to judge; he is actually very amiable and benign. Comedy this devastating would be too risky for most to attempt. But Schuller is no comic. He earnestly wants us to believe all of this, and many*

³⁶ “*An All-Round Ministry.*” C.H. Spurgeon. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, Scotland, 1978 reprint, p.376.

³⁷ Guinness, op cit., p. 39.

³⁸ *The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, Self-Image.* Jay E. Adams. Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, 1986, p. 9.

³⁹ Robert H. Schuller, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation* (Waco TX: Word Books, 1982) p. 38 & Robert Schuller in Craig Ellison, *Your Better Self* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 194; quoted by Adams, op cit., pp. 21-22.

⁴⁰ Quotes taken from page 115 of a critique of *Promise Keepers.*

do... What is the appeal? The answer, it would seem, is that Schuller is adroitly, if unconsciously, riding the stream of modernity. By Yankelovich's estimate, 80 percent of the nation is now engaged in the search for new rules premised on the search for and discovery of the self. Schuller is offering in easily digestible bites the therapeutic model of life through which the healing of the bruised self is found. He is by no means alone in this; he is simply the most shameless."⁴¹

Dr. Wayne Colwell, Rosemead School of Psychology: "***Depression always has a loss of self-esteem in the foreground... Be slow to direct a depressed person to the Scriptures... no preaching. I would recommend a recess from church if there is preaching done in the church.***"⁴² Unbelievable!!!

A BIBLICAL VIEWPOINT ON "SELF-ESTEEM" THINKING:

Jay Adams:

"Romans 12:3: 'Through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.'"

"...Don't fail to notice that in warning against faulty evaluation, Paul says nothing about the possibility of underevaluating one's self. That is not a likely possibility. His only warning is against making too high an estimate: 'Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought to.' The Holy Spirit, writing through Paul, knows us very well!

Consider this:

"Each year the College Board (SAT test) invites the million high school seniors who take its aptitude test to indicate various things about themselves, including, 'How you feel you compare with other people your own age in certain areas of ability.' Judging from their responses in the most recent year for which data are available, it appears that America's high school students are not racked with 'a sense of low self-esteem.'

"In 'leadership ability,' 70 percent rated themselves above average, 2 percent below average. Sixty percent view themselves as better than average in 'athletic ability,' and only 6 percent as below average. In 'ability to get along with others,' zero percent of the 829,000 students who responded rated themselves below average, 60 percent rated themselves in the top 10 percent, and 25 percent see themselves among the top 1 percent.

"Consider also: 'In one study, 94 percent of college faculty think themselves better than their average colleague.'

*"You would think that the words of this verse would give self-esteem advocates some pause. But, thinking more highly of their dogma than they ought to, this verse becomes for them just another 'integrate' into the system. In a pamphlet *The Healing of the Mind*, the unnamed author, commenting on Romans 12:3, says: 'This admonition does not encourage a low estimation, but a true one.' Right so far. But now watch the subtle next step in his argument: 'It actually indicates he is to think highly of himself.' Not so. Probably he is thinking of the English translation 'more highly.' It is true that such wording might indicate that it is all right to think highly, so long as you don't think too highly. (But even that translation doesn't say that a person ought to think highly; it would merely permit it if legitimate.) But remember what the more literal translation says—that a person is not 'to be high-minded above that which you are to be minded.' That changes the tone of the verse altogether. **There is a warning against high-mindedness—nothing more.** When anyone is high-minded, he is minded above that which he ought to be minded. All high-mindedness is wrong. Because the verse does not permit high-mindedness at all, it speaks against most of the self-worth literature."⁴³*

"Because what we think of our gifts, and how well we are using them, is important to our service for Christ, we must evaluate them soberly, according to actual evidence. That is why Paul, in telling us how to evaluate ourselves, warns: 'If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself' (Galatians 6:3). Stop a moment and reflect on the words 'something' and 'nothing.' Could a proponent of the self-esteem view

⁴¹ Wells, op cit., p. 175.

⁴² Adams, op cit., p. 22, citing Jeff Boer, "Is Self-Esteem Proper for a Christian?" in *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 4, p. 78.

⁴³ Adams, op cit., pp. 114-115, citing David Meyers, *The Inflated Self* (New York: Seabury, 1981), pp. 23-24 (College Board info), & David Meyers, "A New Look at Pride," in *Your Better Self*, op. cit., p. 90.

ever bring himself to call someone a ‘nothing’? Yet Paul did so more than once (remember 1 Corinthians 13). Remember Paul’s words reveal God’s estimate of Christians who are failing to live as they should!

“Many people who are accepting the self-esteem teachings not only ‘deceive’ themselves by thinking that they are something when they are nothing (that’s bad enough), but they exult over it and teach God’s little ones to do the same. It is to keep people from exulting over how good they are that Paul wrote these words. His whole point was that we ought not to compare ourselves with others when evaluating: ‘Let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another’ (**Galatians 6:4**). **A sober evaluation is made not on the basis of how well one is doing in comparison with others, but by comparing one’s work with scriptural standards.** If we come out well on that score—and how often do we?—we will have solid reasons for satisfaction.

“Nowhere does he say that we should feel good about ourselves because we exist, because we were made in the image of God, or even because, in Christ, we are made perfect in God’s sight. Rather, because of our sinful tendency to find other people with whom it is easy to compare ourselves favorably (instead of basing our judgment upon genuine achievement) [cf. **II Cor. 10:12**], Paul warned against all such self-deception... Nor is a sinner able to think soberly about himself by reflecting on himself alone. (cf. especially **Proverbs 16:2; 21:2**. These verses indicate that one’s self-image [how he looks to himself, or as Proverbs puts it, ‘in his own eyes’] is basically unsound. When we attempt self-evaluation, we tend not to rate ourselves too low, as the teachers of the New Reformation think, but too highly. Only God’s evaluation of the heart is truly accurate.)”⁴⁴ cf. **Jer. 17:9-10**: “The heart is deceitful above all things and, desperately wicked: Who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins...”

Hunt remarks:

“A mirror reflects a reality other than its own. What is man doing trying to develop a good self image? Instead, we need to get back in line with (God)... The ‘Human Potential Movement’ = self is **IT** (cf. ‘You shall be as gods’-**Gen. 3:5**). **It’s all about ‘I, my, me’**. Eve was a great ‘self’ person... We’re to believe in God and Christ- **NOT self!** (**Isa. 26:3**- “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee”). We’re to trust in God, not self. The biblical solution is to forget self and be in love with Him! ...Zig Ziglar quotes Polonius (Shakespeare) ‘you deserve the good things in life.’ No way! We deserve hell! ... ‘Be true to your authentic personhood’ is rubbish. **Luke 9:23-Christ implores us to DENY self...** Anthony Hoekema’s book titled ‘The Christian Looks at Himself.’ (Instead) Why not look at God? ...Christ did not die for our self-worth, He died for our sin, for worms...

“**But what about all those biblical self-confident guys? Like Moses?** ☺ God didn’t tell Moses, ‘Moses, you’ve got a bad self image, you need to learn to use body language and psychological techniques. Actually Moses had an accurate self image! **God didn’t say, ‘Moses, let’s work on your self image.’ No! He said ‘I (God) will be with you. Pride is the big problem...**

“**Jesus said:** 1) Love God, and 2) Love our neighbor. But today a 3rd one has come in: ‘Love self.’ And it’s become #1! No! Love of self is a GIVEN. **When Jesus said love neighbor as self, he presumed you love yourself automatically** (you wash, comb your hair, brush your teeth, etc., automatically). **Ephesians 5:29:** ‘For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church...’ ...**Suicide is an act of self...** Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that ‘If a man truly knows himself, he knows that no man can say things as bad about me than I am.’ ... David Wilkerson has asked a good question: **‘How many of us would love and live for Jesus if He offered nothing but Himself-no healing, no miracles, no blessings, no nothing-just Himself?’**⁴⁵

One writer has pointed out the dangerous end to which the self-esteem/self-image error leads:

“Self-image pops up again and again as a justification (particularly for sinful behavior): **‘I just don’t see myself as a mother right now’; ‘I can’t be fully myself as long as I’m tied down to her’; ‘I’ll never reach my potential unless I break our agreement.’**

⁴⁴ Adams, op cit., pp. 115-118.

⁴⁵ From a videotape by Dave Hunt, titled “Selfism.” The Berean Call: Bend, Oregon.

*“...The antidote to this poison is an escape from the prison of self-image altogether. The ‘real me’ is a mystery I can’t solve. And praise God for that, for who knows down what twisted paths that search would lead me? The saints of God share one attribute (see Hebrews 11): **Their eyes are turned outward, not in.** Their expanded vision makes them more, not less. Rather than master of a small distorted domain, they become citizens of a limitless kingdom—and ultimately know themselves as truly and fully they are known. Who am I? What a relief to say that I don’t really know. At some time in the past I died, and my resurrected life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is my life, appears, I shall appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:3-4). **Knowing my Redeemer, I can wait to know the real me.**”⁴⁶*

2. GOD’S WISDOM MANIFESTS A COMPLETE DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT. 2:4, 10-16; 3:16.

Compare the above point with the following contradictory statements:

“One Christian advertising agent, who both represented the Coca-Cola Corporation and engineered the “*I Found It*” evangelistic campaign, paraded his golden calf brazenly: **‘Back in Jerusalem where the church started, God performed a miracle there on the day of Pentecost. They didn’t have the benefits of buttons and media, so God had to do a little supernatural work there. But today, with our technology, we have available to us the opportunity to create the same kind of interest in a secular society.’**

“Put simply, another church-growth consultant claims, ‘five to ten million baby boomers would be back in the fold within a month’ if churches adopted three simple changes: **1. “Advertise” 2. Let people know about ‘product benefits’ 3. Be ‘nice to new people.’**”⁴⁷ (sic)

But Guinness has wisely observed: **“If Jesus Christ is true, the church is more than just another human institution. He alone is her head. He is her sole source and single goal. His grace uniquely is her effective principle. What moves her is not finally interchangeable with the dynamics of even the closest of sister institutions... If Jesus Christ is the head of the church and hence the source and goal of its entire life, true growth is only possible in obedience to him. Conversely, if the church becomes detached from Jesus Christ and his word, it cannot truly grow, however active and successful it may seem to be. However spectacular its development, it will prove disappointing in the end... The church of Christ is more than spiritual and theological, but never less. Only when first things are truly first, over even the best and most attractive of second things, will the church be free of idols.**”⁴⁸

3. GOD’S WISDOM IS ROOTED, CENTERED AND BASED ON THE WORD OF GOD ALONE (Which is the place where the Holy Spirit speaks to us! – cf. II Tim. 3:16-17; II Pet. 1:21; etc.). **2:1, 4-6, 13; 3:18, 21.**

ILLUSTRATION:

LEADERSHIP JOURNAL. “...the new shape (of) ...the Christian ministry, (is) well illustrated in *Leadership*, a highly successful journal designed for the clergy that was launched by Christianity Today in 1980... Between 1980 and 1988, 80 percent of the journal’s material was devoted to the personal crises, perplexities, and challenges encountered by the clergy, and 13 percent of the material was concerned with techniques for managing the church. **Since this is an evangelical publication, it is quite stunning to observe that less than 1 percent of the material made any clear reference to Scripture, still less to any idea that is theological... The articles are single-minded in their devotion to the wisdom that psychology and business management offer, and apparently as equally single-minded in their skepticism concerning what Scripture and theology offer for addressing the practical crises of pastoral life. Even when the subjects being discussed were temptation, sexuality, church discipline, church structure, and preaching—subjects about which Scripture has much to say—the authors of the articles in *Leadership* thought that it would be better to look elsewhere for help in their pastoral tasks!**”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Janie B. Cheaney, “*The Real Me*.” WORLD magazine, May 19, 2001, p. 41.

⁴⁷ Guinness, op cit., p. 38.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 39.

⁴⁹ Wells, op cit., pp. 113-114.

In one of Minirth & Meier's brochures there's not a single reference to Scripture!⁵⁰

"IT'S NOT A QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT YOU USE THE BIBLE, BUT RATHER THE PLACE OF THE BIBLE..." as Wells stated in a quote given earlier.

PAUL TILLICH, KARL BARTH, & CARL HENRY, All claimed to be biblical! (But they were light years apart in what they believed and taught!-mwe)

D. M. Lloyd-Jones: *"The church, though she has been reformed, must be constantly re-formed, semper reformanda. Always reform! The church is always to be under the Word; she must be; we must keep her there. You must not assume that because the church started correctly, she will continue so. She did not do so in the New Testament times; she has not done so since. Without being constantly reformed by the Word, the church becomes something very different."*⁵¹

4. GOD'S WISDOM ELEVATES PREACHING AND MAKES IT CENTRAL. 1:21, 23; 2:4-8.

ILLUSTRATION - PETER MASTERS:

*"(Paul) doesn't say that preaching is foolish! In fact, the genius of preaching is that you can get closer to people's sins without getting punched up, than in any other way... You can't talk about their rotten stinking pride, their sexual sins, etc., one on one. But in preaching, you can!"*⁵²

"Is not my word like fire?" declares the LORD, *'and like a hammer which shatters a rock?'* (Jer. 23:29 NASV). cf. Heb. 4:12-13; Ps. 19:7; etc.

CONCLUSION: 4:16-17 – *"Be imitators of me..."* (the apostle Paul). In other words...

Preach! Preach Christ and the Cross, in total dependence on the Holy Spirit and the Word He has authored and inspired! This will accomplish the Great Commission and build churches.

Shun the use of worldly, human wisdom and management techniques, avoid an emphasis on external signs and manifestations, and beware of elevating and focusing on leaders, personalities, and organizations.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones' words echo as powerfully as they did several decades ago:

"Now you and I have been called to a positive task. We are guardians and custodians of the faith, the faith that has been given once and forever to the saints... My friends, we are not only the guardians and custodians of the faith of the Bible; we are the modern representatives and successors of the glorious men who fought this same fight, the good fight of faith, in centuries past. Surely, as evangelicals we ought to feel this appeal... We are the modern representatives of these men, and of the Puritans, the Covenanters, the early Methodists, and others. Can you not see the opportunity? I believe that God is calling us to maintain this ancient witness, not occasionally, not haphazardly, but always, and to put it to the people of this country..."

*There are great and grievous difficulties; I am well aware of them. I know that there are men, ministers and clergy, in this congregation at the moment, who if they did what I am exhorting them to do, would have a tremendous problem before them, even a financial, an economic and a family problem. I do not want to minimize this. My heart goes out to such men. There are great problems confronting us if we act on these principles. **But has the day come when we, as (Bible-believers), are afraid of problems? The true Christian has always had problems.** The early Christians had grievous problems, ostracized from their families and the threat of death ever facing them. They were not daunted; they went on; they believed; they knew; they would rather die than not stand for the truth. And it has been so throughout the centuries. Was Martin Luther not confronted by a problem when he saw the truth? Of course he was; but he was not deterred by the problem; and so with all the martyrs and confessors throughout the ages.*

⁵⁰ Quote by Dave Hunt, *"Selfism."* The Berean Call: Bend, OR.

⁵¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times*, op cit., p. 315.

⁵² Comments taken from a tape of a message delivered by Dr. Masters at Temple Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan c. 1971-72 at a large convention/meeting of independent Baptists.

“My dear friends, we are living in tremendous times. We are living in one of the great turning points of history. I have said already and I say it again, there has been nothing like this since the sixteenth century. It is a glorious opportunity. We may be small in numbers but since when has the doctrine of the remnant become unpopular among evangelicals? It is one of the most glorious doctrines in the whole of the Bible. We are not interested in numbers. We are interested in truth and in the living God. If God be for us, who can be against us?’ Go home and read the story of Gideon again. Go home and read many another example of what God, at times, has accomplished through just one man. Do not be concerned about numbers. ***If we stand for God’s truth, we can be certain and sure that God will honour us and bless us.*** Therefore, my dear friends, fellow (Bible-believing) Christians, let us rise to the occasion. Let us listen to what I believe is the call of God.”⁵³

“You may be in the pulpit of Whitefield, you may have Whitefield’s knowledge, and even more than he had, for he was not a very learned man, but the secret of Whitefield was his God, and without Him we avail nothing.”⁵⁴

⁵³ *Knowing the Times*, op cit., “Evangelical Unity: An Appeal”, pp. 255-257.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, “A Protestant Evangelical College,” op cit., p. 375.