**THE PREACHER’S REWARD**

***Seed To The Sower & Bread To The Eater***

Isaiah 55:10-11

*“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there,
 But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud,
 That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater,
“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void,
 But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it*.

God’s word falls as droplets of rain, or as tiny little snowflakes, all seemingly insignificant in the grand scheme of things. After all, a drop of rain or a simple snowflake can’t possibly make a difference in the great ecological universe, can it?

Ah, but it does. That drop, that flake, combined with the one next to it, and the one after it, accumulates into enough moisture to give needed drink to the flower bud, or corn stalk, which in turn is nourished enough to produce a flower’s pollen for the bees, and corn crop which gives food to the hungry eater.

Here’s the point, what the world shrugs off as insignificant is in fact the very thing that changes the world.

When an apostle, prophet, preacher, or teacher speaks a word of truth from the Bible he or she can be as certain as that raindrop or snowflake that they have made a difference. God’s word, just like God’s rain and snow, shall never return to Him void. The bucket will always be full, for truth will “*accomplish*” (produce) its mission and “*prosper*” (achieve – NIV) His intended purpose.

Like the old proverb puts it, “The same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay.” While one heart is softened by the Word, another is hardened by the exact same message. The same message that “*cut to the heart*” the 3,000 baptized believers on Pentecost, also “*cut to the heart*” the savage men who gnashed Stephen with their teeth and then stoned him (Ac. 2:37; 7:54). One heart melted, one hardened, all with the same gospel, just as God intended.

I have been a preacher on a full-time basis since 1975. That means I’m going on 46 years of trying, with my limited God-given ability, to tell others of God’s salvation. Unlike other public speakers in the secular world who must rely on great communication skills to impact their audience, the gospel preacher has the promise of Romans 1:16 to his advantage. “*For I am not ashamed of the* ***gospel*** *of Christ, for* ***it*** *is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek*.”

Just think of that for a moment. There stands the prophet Amos against the entire idolatrous nation of Israel and against Jereboam II the king. He pronounces a death-sentence upon the king and the downfall of the nation. Amaziah the priest of Bethel (where Jereboam the first had set up an idol to keep Israel from returning to Jerusalem), tells Amos to get lost, to go back to Judah to prophesy. What Amos said in reply is classic:

14 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah: “I was no prophet, Nor was I a son of a prophet, But I was a sheepbreeder, and a tender of sycamore fruit.
15 Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me,
‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’
16 Now therefore, hear the word of the LORD: You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel,
And do not spout against the house of Isaac.’
17 “Therefore thus says the LORD: Your wife shall be a harlot in the city; Your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword; Your land shall be divided by survey line; You shall die in a defiled land; And Israel shall surely be led away captive from his own land.’”

Amos was a simple shepherd and arborist. He was no trained prophet, nor did he come from a family of prophets. But God used his voice to powerfully impact a nation.

I have also thought a lot about one of my favorite preachers (prophets) from the Old Testament throughout my 46 years of preaching. His name is not as familiar as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah or Elisha, but Micaiah flashed onto the scene like a meteor, did his one great deed, then like a meteor flashed out of sight.

King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah had made an alliance to fight against Syria. 400 false prophets of Israel had “prophesied” success in their upcoming battle. But Jehoshaphat insisted they ask a prophet from Jehovah. Ahab cringed at the name of Micaiah because he always foretold gloom and doom against him. But at Jehoshaphat’s insistence they brought him in to give God’s prediction. Micaiah had been forewarned to “go along to get along” with the 400 prophets of Baal. His reply is perfect: *“As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.”* (I Kgs. 22:14).

When asked his judgment as to the coming battle, Micaiah, tongue in cheek, said to by all means go up to battle and God will give you success. Ahab saw the mockery in his body language and demanded he tell the truth. So Micaiah told the truth… Ahab would die in battle and Israel would be scattered to the four winds. For that bad news he was arrested, put into a dungeon and given starvation rations of bread and water. That’s the last we ever hear of Micaiah, but his name lives on in the hearts and minds of all gospel preachers who imitate his creed: “*As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak*!” It is the same command Paul gave Timothy when he charged him to “*Preach the word in season and out of season*!” (2 Tim. 4:2).

To all of us who teach and preach the Word of God we take great consolation in the fact that the message we speak is “*seed to the sower and bread to the eater*.” We plant the seed, water it, then let God give the increase (I Cor. 3:6). The “increase” might actually be a decrease in actual numbers in the church directory, for it could lead to “*many of His disciples turned and walked no more with Him*” (Jn. 6:66). Withdrawing from a man walking disorderly is an increase in God’s eyes. We must never forget that.

The preacher’s reward is only counted in heaven, not earth. – Rick