

That Familiar Ring of Truth

The preacher's topic: "The Conversion of Saul." But why that topic? Aren't most of us familiar with that? Shouldn't the preacher choose something new and more challenging? Why preach what is familiar?

1. It confirms convictions we have formed through the years. Most of us have strong beliefs concerning what a sinner needs to do to be saved, what constitutes the pattern set by the apostles for each local church, what the Lord wants of us on a daily basis, and on many other issues. When we hear sermons confirming these convictions, it builds our confidence that we are indeed doing the Lord's will and strengthens our hope of eternal life.
2. It conforms our teaching to the example of the apostles. Peter wrote that he was reminding his readers of certain things, that he would continue to do so, and that he would see to it that they would continue to "have a reminder of these things after my decease" (2 Peter 1: 12-15). Peter knew that Christians need to hear the truth - familiar truth - again and again.
3. It builds convictions in those who are young and those who are new in the faith. There are reasons why we who have been Christians for many years are familiar with these scriptures. It is because of the preaching we have heard since our youth. Today's young people and newer converts need this same opportunity.
4. It thrills listeners to hear again that which has brought joy to them in the past. A sports fan views a rerun of an exciting game his team has won. He knows exactly the moment when the running back scoots through the defense and scores a touchdown. He knows when that moment is near, and he can't wait to see it again. It never gets old to him. So it is when we love the scriptures. We rejoice to hear the message. It never grows old. We anticipate certain scriptures and points that are about to be presented. We never tire of the old, old story.

Catherine Hankey said it this way:

I love to tell the story,
For those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting
To hear it like the rest;
And when, in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,
Twill be the old, old story
That I have loved so long.

Our purpose is not "to tell or to hear some new thing," as seems to be the trend. Our purpose is to preach truth. If we are bored with that message, something is wrong with us spiritually. If we need to apologize anytime we preach it, something is wrong with our audience. The ring of truth! The **familiar** ring of truth! Preach it, Brother! We thank God for the joy of hearing it again and again.

- by **Bill Hall**

Do You Understand? Will You Obey?

Mark Twain, an unbeliever, said about the Bible; "It's not what I don't understand about it that bothers me - it's what I do understand that is the problem!" Although he apparently never did anything about those fears, his observation was absolutely accurate.

Someone else observed: "You may not understand all you read in the Bible, but you can obey what you do understand." That statement is true, too.

What we're saying here is that the Bible, while difficult to understand in a few places, really has a very simple story to tell. It teaches us about God in a down-to-earth, easy to digest sort of way. Its commands are explained so that a person with little or no formal education can still

comprehend and comply. Simply put, you can know and obey the will of God. The only remaining question is: Will you do it?

- *Selected*

A Plea That Needs To Be Heard

"I pray you leave my name alone and call not yourselves Lutherans, but Christians. Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone . . . How does it then befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with all of them; and let us call ourselves only Christians, after Him from whom our doctrine comes."

- *from Life of Luther, by Michelet*

Do You Really Think You Are the First One to Think of That?

You won't believe my latest invention. I call it the 'internal combustion engine'. I'm very excited about all the possible applications of this unique discovery of mine. What? You mean someone thought of that before me!?! Oh, well, I'll just pursue some other 'new thing'.

Everyone would regard a person making such a claim as a true lunatic. How could one possibly imagine to have invented something that has been around for 150 years or more and is known and used throughout the world? We would view that fella with extreme suspicion and caution.

Sadly, religious discussions tend to attract this sort of outrageous claim. Frequently we talk to people who suggest that they have come up with something in the Bible that no one ever thought of before. Really? This ancient book has been around for thousands of years, and you want us to believe that you have discovered a truth that no one else ever found? Not likely.

The apostle Paul dealt with some folks who "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). The problem was, of course, that when he confronted them with the truth they mocked him and discounted his message (vs. 32). The same danger exists today for those who are always looking for "some new thing."

Many highly intelligent people have devoted their whole lives to the study of God's Word. Their written discourses are preserved for us to read and research. Within our own lifetimes we have been surrounded by faithful brethren who have diligently applied themselves to the Scriptures. Now, of course, they are not the absolute standard of what is true and right. But we should not quickly discount their scholarship in favor of our own 'latter day' discoveries. Think!

- *by Greg Gwin*