

Two Preachers: Amos and Amaziah

By Mark White

The Old Testament prophet Amos was a shepherd turned preacher. The crowd to whom he preached was the upper class of Israel, including the King himself. He was not their choice of a preacher, however. They did not choose him -- God chose Amos for them. His oratory was not refined eloquence. His preaching was not "polite" by their standards. If they could have "fired" him, they would have, but Amos was God's preacher, not theirs. **Amos 7:10-13** provides commentary on his work in Israel. "Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel saying, 'Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said: "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, And Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land." Then Amaziah said to Amos: "Go you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread and there prophesy. But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the King's sanctuary, and it is the royal residence." This text shows Amaziah to be a different kind of preacher than Amos. Amaziah would preach what his hearers wanted, rather than what they really needed. He disliked Amos' style and message. He scoffed at the warnings Amos issued about judgments coming upon Israel because of her sins. Doubtless, it pleased King Jeroboam to hear Amaziah rebuke Amos. Amaziah told Amos to leave Israel and go to Judah, where his kind of preaching might be more appreciated. "We are too refined and sophisticated for this kind of preach-

ing," Amaziah might be heard to say. But Amos did not keep quiet. He did not allow Amaziah to ridicule him and his work. He said, "I was not prophet, nor was I the son of a prophet, but I was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.' Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord..."

Amos was not a preacher for hire! He was not a prophet because his father was, or because he had gone to a "brotherhood preacher school." Nor did he preach because he was looking for employment! He was preaching because God told him to prophesy. We are made to wonder, "Why was Amaziah preaching?"

Many churches today want preachers like Amaziah. He would never be so rude as to disturb the peace of a congregation by pointing out its errors. He would not bother people by calling them to repent! No one would leave his preaching with feelings of guilt. Everything would be so sweet and pleasant that God would become nauseous! Conversely, Amos' preaching would not always be pleasant. It might even be troublesome at times if people insist on remaining in sin. His harsh rebukes might even cause some guilt feelings and unrest. But, remember -- Amos was God's preacher! Honestly now, which kind of preacher would you prefer--Amos, or Amaziah?



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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)**

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Thought to Ponder

The devil cannot take from the soul the light of faith: he, however, removes the light of consideration; so that the soul may not reflect on what is true. It is of no advantage to be near the light if the eyes are closed.

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Larry Rouse
Evangelist & Editor

"The Church has no Business Dealing with Issues"

By Tim Nichols

This (the title of this article) is an ambiguous statement that we have heard many times over the years but have never once understood. These sentiments have been proclaimed from pulpits, whispered in conversation, and parroted in pews so many times for so many years that one might assume that it is a restatement of some Bible principle. It is not (unless the term "issue" is redefined so as to mean something not reflected by the dictionary). No passage of inspired scripture is as vague as this oft-repeated statement. What does it mean? As we look over the various options offered by the dictionary for the noun, "issue", we are unable to say for certain which option is meant and what is meant by the phrase. As we carefully study the Bible in search

Try to think of a Bible truth that has not been disputed. You cannot do so. The existence of God is a disputed question. The divinity of Christ is rejected by a majority of the world's population. Relatively few believe in the inspiration of the scriptures. These are the most basic truths on which Christianity is based. No right-thinking Christian would have us neglect these "issues."

of some parallel phrase or similar sentiment we are unable to find a passage that would seem to say anything like this. I cannot help but suspect that many of those who say such things also have a poorly defined sense of what they are saying and an equally obscure notion of where it is taught in God's book.

I suppose that the most likely meaning is that we should not

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deal with matters in our teaching and preaching that are disputed or about which there are questions, but I cannot understand how anyone could say, and mean, such a thing in light of the Biblical injunctions to preach the word and in light of the realities that are around us.

People are lost in sin all around us. False doctrines are leading them further and further away from the source of the salvation offered by the God of heaven. Confusing conceptions of God, truth, and righteousness are destroying the faith of many.

Divine truth is the answer to absolutely every enduring human problem (**Hebrews 4:12**). It is God's means of guiding and directing us from here to heaven. Every truth that He has delivered for our benefit is precious and worthy of our diligent study and application. We have a duty to contend for the faith because it is so invaluable (**Jude 3**) and because it cannot be readily received by those who tenaciously hold onto competing ideas that are false (**Titus 1:11**). Every faithful child of God has a yearning to learn more and more of what God has to say to us in His inspired book (Psalm 119:103). No faithful Christian desires to remain ignorant of any part of what God is attempting to reveal (**Hebrews 12:25**).

Try to think of a Bible truth that has not

been disputed. You cannot do so. The existence of God is a disputed question. The divinity of Christ is rejected by a majority of the world's population. Relatively few believe in the inspiration of the scriptures. These are the most basic truths on which Christianity is based. No right-thinking Christian would have us neglect these "issues." Abortion, the identity of the church, how to become a Christian, how to worship God, and all other "issues" addressed by truth are issues that we must address if we are to be faithful to our position as the pillar and ground of the truth (**1 Timothy 3:15**). When the church abandons its post by refraining from teaching what the people of the world (and worldly "members") do not wish to hear, it ceases to be the salt of the earth (or at least it becomes worthless salt that has lost its savor -- **Matthew 5:13**). If we were to attempt the impossible task of dealing only with "non-issues" we would have no reason to exist, no message for the world, no truth to teach, no correction for those who need it (all of us), and no edification for the hearers of our delicate little, feel-good sermonettes who would be left without a word from God.

By the way, Truth edifies (**1 Corinthians 14; Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:11-16**). Fluff does not. Opinion does not. Titillating tidbits and amusing anecdotes do not. Being pacified, mollified, or electrified is not the same as being edified. Your faith is built (edified) of only one material (**Romans 10:17**).



A Reason for the Hope

By Bobby Graham

The apostle Peter charges the Christian in **1 Peter 3:15**: "But sanctify in your heart Christ as Lord, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Peter did not say that the Christians should answer every man or every question, for some deserve no answer. He did, however, tells us to be ready always to give that answer.

Every Christian who is on the firing line will be confronted with questions about his hope. Many times he will be asked why he is what he is. On these occasions he must be ready to rise to the forefront to give his reason.

Just any reason will not suffice. The very familiar "because this is what I've been taught" or "this is what Mother believed" do not express Bible reasons. Both of them, in fact, set aside the authority of the text and exalt other authorities. The reasons we give must be able to convince the gainsayer, and only those that the Lord has supplied in His Word can do so.

Every child of God, therefore, must be a student of the book in order that he might become an able apologist or defender of the faith of the gospel. Let us note some other passages that enjoin the same responsibility:

Jude 3 - "contend for the faith"

Philippians 1:17 - "set for the defense of the gospel"

Only from the Bible itself can we really find the equipment that he needs in this defense. To go elsewhere is to risk faulty or inadequate equipment. Books and articles written by men are always susceptible to human error, whereas "all scripture is given by inspiration of God."

From these we can see that the Christian must be equipped to defend the faith. Only from the Bible itself can we really find the equipment that he needs in this defense. To go elsewhere is to risk faulty or inadequate equipment. Books and articles written by men are always susceptible to human error, whereas "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." Paul's description of

the battle armor for the Christian indicates that its every part is either the Word or that which the Word supplies. Well does the song admonish: "Soldiers of Christ arise and put your armor on; Strong in the strength which God supplies, Strong in the strength which God supplies, Through His beloved Son." Let us therefore busy ourselves in a study of the Book.

If we will familiarize ourselves with the Bible, we will have no foe so formidable that we cannot overcome him. We will be able to combat every false idea, to abate every attempt of Satan, and to see through the cunning craftiness and sleight of men whereby they wait to deceive the uninformed and thus unstable soul. After we have familiarized ourselves with the Scriptures, let us apply ourselves to a steadfast use of the Word. In so doing, we can join our hearts and hands in defense of the cause of our king, who once so ably defended ours. Then at the close of day, we can claim the victor's crown and the other rewards that the Lord has promised to those who overcome.

