



work and the work of brethren they knew. These brethren weren't talking about human organizations, institutions, psychology, or projects conceived in the mind of man. They spoke of obedience to the "Gospel," the "Truth," and "faithfulness." I've never shared this with these humble

men, but I was struck by the fact that they talked about what New Testament Christians talked about. Their concerns were like those of the apostles or disciples of the first century. That was a turning point in my life.

When those who seek to uphold this distinctiveness make it sound as if we are calling people to be "like us," it sounds like an arrogant party spirit. If we make it sound as if there is no distinction between the Lord's church and the denominations, we surrender the singular character of the faith which the Bible teaches. We must strive to show people that what all of us should be is simply (and distinctively) what God wants us to be—*Christians*.



Faithful Sayings Issue 15.8 February 24, 2013

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Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

● Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE

15.8

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

February 24
2013



Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Distinctive Preaching

By Kyle Pope

Over twenty years ago now, an old friend of mine faced a trial in his work as a gospel preacher. An elder of the church for which he was preaching, in a very tactless manner, criticized the brother for failing to offer lessons that he called "distinctive." My friend's feelings were hurt and relationships were strained. Unfortunately, that brother is no longer preaching or even worshipping with a sound congregation. As the years have rolled on I have often thought about what the elder said to the brother and I believe that I have come to understand what he was trying to address, however calloused it may have been done.

We live in a world that is, and has always been a very religious place. The problem is not the lack of religion but the pervasiveness of false religion. Most faiths,

including those who do not focus on Jesus Christ, differ more in peripheral matters than in morality, lifestyle, and issues concerning attitudes. While these similarities can serve as a starting point in our discussions with people, many pulpits come to the point that what is taught differs very little from one church to another, whether that church is



Olsen Park church of Christ

sound in faith or not. The easiest thing for any preacher to do is to boil down a lesson to the “lowest common denominator” of those matters that are generally accepted in religious matters. A preacher doesn’t set out to “water down” a lesson. It is more subtle than that. He simply fails to offer teaching that distinguishes gospel preaching from all other things that are taught in the religious world.

The Bible teaches a faith that is distinctive. Jesus wanted all who believe in Him to be one (John 17:21). Paul taught, through the Holy Spirit, that there is “**one faith**” (Ephesians 4:5). Paul taught the same things “**everywhere in every church**” (1 Corinthians 4:17). New Testament preachers were always willing to show exactly how the truth of the gospel was distinct from the errors of their own age, whether it concerned the resurrection (Acts 17:30-32; 23:6-10), morality (1 Corinthians 5-7), circumcision (Galatians 2:11-21), or the nature of Christ (1 John 4:1-3). If we are to stand up for the faith “**once for all delivered to the saints**” (Jude 3), we must be willing to do exactly the same thing.

Many older Christians remember times when almost every sermon addressed the plan of salvation, baptism by immersion, non-instrumental singing in worship, or church organization. While it might be

that some brethren in those years could have done a better job of trying to declare the “**whole counsel of God**” (Acts 20:27), our generation faces another danger. As we try to teach all of God’s word, if we do not consciously and deliberately strive to uphold exactly how God’s word is distinct from the religious world, we may communicate something we do not intend to—unity with error!

Does this mean that every sermon should be argumentative, critical or aggressive? Must we come across as “hard to get along with” or judgmental? No. But neither should we be afraid to simply, boldly, and lovingly state exactly when something is wrong and when it is right.

I can say that in my own life this distinctiveness has had a profound effect on my own faith. As a child I worshiped with non-institutional congregations, but when I was in third grade my parents began to worship with an institutional group. My wife and I met and married while we worshiped among brethren who held very liberal attitudes towards God’s word.



On one wonderful occasion I had the opportunity to attend a gospel meeting and afterwards to sit down at a dinner table with two faithful gospel preachers, my uncle Wayne Partain and brother Paul Earnhart. They weren’t discussing anything all that was that profound, they were just talking about their