

PLAIN SPEECH

Volume 1 – Issue 5 – 18 November 2007

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

By Scott Parker

SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO LAUGH NOT TO CRY

When I first started preaching, an older preacher shared with me sad news. He plainly said: *“Scott, in forty plus years of teaching and preaching I have never seen the brotherhood as ignorant of the Bible as they are today.”* I am afraid that old preacher was telling the truth. Folks, it’s simply a fact that far too many in just about any congregation across America are biblically impotent. Let the following parody – taken to the extreme – demonstrate the ineptitude most brethren have when it comes to the Bible.

One Sunday the elders of a congregation – not willing to teach themselves – asked one of the “good old boys” of the congregation to teach the coming midweek Bible study on the parables of Jesus. The good old boy agreed. He asked the elders for a class book – the teacher’s edition – but they informed him that the publishing company was out of stock. Not worried, he told them “He would come up with something.” Monday he worked, ate, and watched football. Tuesday he worked, ate, and watched baseball. The good old boy waited until 4:00 on Wednesday afternoon to begin planning for that night’s class. He sat down to “study,” but met many obstacles. The man’s internet connection was on the fritz, so he could not download a lesson guide from the web. He did not have a commentary dealing with the parables and there was no time to run to the store to look for one. He tried to call a preacher whom he just revered and got only a busy signal. It was now 6:30. He decided he would just “wing it.” Class started and the good old boy – having forgotten his Bible at home – recited his favorite “parable” from memory. He said:

Once upon a time a man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves. While he was on the ground, the thorns grew up and started to choke that man. He eventually broke free, but still was badly injured from the thieves. However, he healed up quickly because the dogs came and licked his sores. Feeling better, he went on into the far country, even though he had no money. Luckily, on his way he met the Queen of Sheba and she gave him a thousand talents of gold and a hundred changes of raiment. Soon after, he met a caravan going down to Egypt and from those guys he bought a chariot with flames on the side. One day as he was driving along, his hair became caught in the limb of a big oak tree and he was left hanging there as his chariot went over a cliff and perished in the sea. He was hanging there for many days and many nights, but he did not go hungry because the ravens came and gave him food. One night, as he was hanging there, fast asleep, his wife Delilah found him. She cut off his hair and he fell on the stony ground. That night it began to rain, and it rained for forty days and forty nights, but the man remained dry because he went and hid himself in a cave. After the rain stopped, he met, as he walked along the Jericho road, a man who invited him to a great supper. Yet, the traveler would not go because the witch of Endor conjured up Samuel who informed him about the man’s cooking – it was always lukewarm. He finally decided to go back to Jerusalem. Needing to get there before winter, he had to locate transportation. He had no money again, because he had lost his coins in a house. The man, however, had a great idea: he would sell his birthright to a man for a donkey and ride it into town. When the man entered the city, he saw Jezebel sitting high up in a window, laughing at him. He was furious and asked some bystanders to throw her from the window. The bystanders obliged the man. Afterwards, the man asked them to throw her down again. The bystanders got excited and threw her down seventy times seven times. Afterwards, they picked up the fragments of Jezebel – twelve baskets full – all the while wondering whose wife she would be in the Day of Judgment.

Sometimes you have to laugh not to cry (**Proverbs 14:13**).

Folks, we are members of the church. We ought to know more Bible than anyone. We ought to be able to honestly say with Job of olden time: *“Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food”* (Job 23:12). We ought to be able to say with the Psalmist: *“I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches”* (Psalm 119:14). We ought to take very seriously passages like **Matthew 5:6** and **2 Timothy 2:15** and act accordingly.

Are you striving to hide God’s word in your heart (**Psalm 119:11**) or are you kind of like the good old boy?