

Kington Baptist Church

MESSAGE BOARD – 93

Any Christian preacher has to face an uncomfortable truth. The truth is that it is easily possible to preach about the most glorious realities and make them seem very ordinary, or even unattractive.

I'm not giving names, but occasionally I've watched certain 'evangelists' on television. I've listened to them preach about the glory of heaven, the love of Christ, the joy of being a Christian. And the thought has gone through my mind – I'm a little ashamed to say – the thought has gone through my mind: 'I'm not sure if I want anything to do with that'.

What an odd response to the preaching of the gospel! I've had to ask myself, 'Why do you feel that?' 'What has made you respond in that way?' And I've come to the conclusion that there are two reasons for my reaction. The first is the attitude of the preacher. What was it about the preacher that provoked my reaction? I came to see it was preacher's air of self-importance. He somehow slipped himself, his 'importance', his 'wisdom', his 'knowledge', between me and the Word of God, so I couldn't see or hear the glory of the gospel because it was hidden by the personality of the preacher.

But I came to the conclusion that that wasn't the only reason for my strange reaction. There was another. And here I'm on thin-ice; I may place myself in jeopardy. But I speak as I found. And what I found was that it wasn't only the preacher that put a barrier between me and the glory of the gospel but the congregation, the 'audience' did the same. There were two types of response from the congregations that created a problem. The one was adulation, adulation and applause – a sort of 'hero worship'. The other was its opposite: a careless indifference, a nonchalant take-it-or-leave-it attitude.

I'm pleased to say that when I read my Bible I'm thrilled by what I read. I'm also just as thrilled when I listen to many, many preachers.

But I think there's a lesson in all this. And the lesson is that you and I, as individuals or as a congregation, make a great difference as to how the Word of God is heard and responded to. We either help others share its joy and glory – or, if we behave in a way that draws attention away from the Word of God to ourselves, we inhibit the 'hearing of the Word'.

The heart of all this is that we depend on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify *Christ* – not me, not the preacher, whoever the preacher happens to be. Also the Holy Spirit has been sent to the *Church* – not to boost individual egos but to build-up the Church, the fellowship of Christian people. As together we respond to the Holy Spirit's presence and work we glimpse the glory of the gospel. Indifference to the Holy Spirit hampers his work and obscures the glory of Christ.