

## OUT OF THE FULLNESS OF THE HEART

Study notes of J. A. Reynolds for lesson on March 28, 2007  
at Old Union Baptist Ministers School, Bowling Green, KY

In 1857 at the Franklin Association of Kentucky Baptists "the subject of reading sermons from the pulpit was brought before the association, and deferred for consideration, until the next session of the body. At the succeeding meeting of the Association, the following was passed: '*Resolved, We do not approve of reading sermons from the pulpit, as a common custom, in our denomination.*' The evil complained of still continued, and the Association again expressed itself on the subject, in its circular letter for 1865, in language of the following purport: '*Again, another evil of the times is the reading of sermons, in place of speaking them from the fullness of heart. Who but the ministry is responsible for this soul-sleeping custom? Imagine for a moment, Paul or Peter reading his sermons to his congregations! How ridiculous! How absurd! As an evidence of God's disapprobation of this custom, we would ask those who practice it to give an instance, a single instance of one individual's being awakened by such a brother's reading a sermon on such an occasion. And yet, with this evidence against this practice, we see it growing more and more common among the ministering brethren. This is one sin for which the ministry is responsible. The church has never demanded it; the world has never required it at their hands. It is opposed to the spirit and pathos of the religion of our fathers.*'"

Constituted in 1815, this old association soon became a model of success by surviving with continued prosperity such schismatic questions as the Anti-Mission controversy, the Campbellite subversion, toleration of Temperance Societies, in its early years. It always seemed to come down on the side of sound judgment and reason on every question rather than splitting into radical extremes and scattering as many others did. Historian J. H. Spencer gives much credit to the Godly wisdom of Elder Silas Noel for that success.

The fact that Spencer, who had evolved with all of us away from the prevalent Calvinistic tendencies of those times, had such praise for the conduct of Noel and this association in 1886 indicates that this Allen County native and his generation were still generally holding to these conclusions. ( from A History of Kentucky Baptists by J. H. Spencer, Volume 2, page 295)

Points: We cannot know exactly what they meant by "reading of sermons"  
Scriptures verses? Notes? Outlines? Manuscripts?

We can know what is meant by speaking "from the fullness of the heart"

**This is where the "gifts" of genuine God-called ministry were traditionally judged by our churches, and I believe this is a needed judgment to preserve our future.**

An unsaved man can put together a manuscript sermon of much truth if he has the right sources to gather his teachings. They do it all of the time. This was one of the vehicles of the great Baptist apostasy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All they need are the right Bible commentaries which are abundant. But this is where men not led of the Holy Spirit can unwittingly incorporate cunningly devised fables which cleverly deceive, and thousands do it every week. (This does not mean that there is no value in a written manuscript containing revealed truth which a man of God is moved by the Holy Spirit to write. I am not going to say that someone could not be saved from reading such a document or hearing it read, but this should never become the norm of our preaching. It has been said that Jonathan Edwards read his sermons. Perhaps, but perhaps not! It is entirely possible that a man could write out his study notes in manuscript detail and never look at them as he preached the same lesson, out of the fullness of his heart. I practiced essentially that many times in the first 20 years of my ministry. It is a little hard to believe that he got the amazing audience response that was commonly reported unless the fullness of his heart was pouring out the word.

Does the power of your preaching depend upon your faith in what you are saying?  
Very much so!

The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel is revealed "from faith to faith." That is generally taken to mean in successive steps of a man's own faith. That is a small portion of faith exercised brings ability to believe even more until deliverance is reached. But often, by the grace of God, the power in the witness'

faith if communicated to the hearer's faith to enhance it until it becomes belief with the heart unto righteousness." (Romans 1:17 & 10:10)

Is God able to bypass the faithlessness of the preacher? Is He not omnipotent? He can do so when it pleases him in his mercy, but this is not his normal mode of operation. Faithless witnesses will not result in many true conversions.

What if the fullness of the heart is bad? Sometimes it is!

*Matthew 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. 36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. 37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

A spiritually discerning mature Christian can detect the viper in a Pharisee sooner or later. If he keeps talking, he will reveal himself to a person close to God. Such fullness is better off not spoken!

Can a heart of a child of God, even a God-called preacher, be full of such evil as ought not to be uttered? Have you ever heard a preacher deliver an angry sermon, not remembering that *"the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."* (James 1:20) I am ashamed to say that I have witnessed this a few times, from sometimes good preachers, even a long sermon without the aid of a single written note. I was sure that his heart was full of the wrath of man. Preachers, guard against this!

*Proverbs 4:23 "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. 24 Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee."*

It is hard, if not impossible, to speak out of the fullness of heart without revealing what should not be there!

Would it not be better, if the heart is not right, to bypass its fullness and simply translate what God has written in the Bible to the hearers. I agree! Is that not what lost preachers regularly do! Are not the hearers endangered if we resort to that also.

Preparation is not an excuse for a heart that is not right! You may fool a lot of people, but you will not fool God to obtain his power.

**Hearts are not right when they are full of anger, bitterness, envy, strife, pride, or lack of mercy, longsuffering, love, tolerance, compassion, and willingness to forgive.**

**If the heart is not right, proper preaching is not possible** whether much preparation, or little, is before you, but a right heart does not make up for slothfulness in preparation either.

Is it proper for pastors to "teach" the people out of his own God-given wisdom, even when he is not greatly anointed by the Holy Spirit? Is he "apt to teach" if he cannot do this? I think not! The teaching gets better when the Holy Spirit anoints his delivery of the wisdom written in his heart, but what if that does not happen?

What does a preacher do who brags of his dependence upon a superior anointing if it does not come? Will he sit down and leave the people hungry? Will he fake the emotion and sound as if he is anointed? (real spiritual people can detect this!) Will he resort to teaching what he knows to be true in his heart.

Who would not like to go every time to the pulpit with cup running over from a fresh filling of Holy Spirit and have God unroll a scroll of remembered scriptures before him to utter to the people connected in a way that he could never repeat on his own?

What about the hard times? It is necessary for conscience and knowledge of truth to explode the heart at times with irresistible utterances of great value.

Examples: Elihu : (Job 32:7) *"I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. 8 But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. 9 Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment. 10 Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion. ... 18 For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. 19 Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. 20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed: I will open my lips and answer."*

And what a right answer he did give, contained in five long chapters, after which God Himself took up where Elihu left off, reproving and instructing Job for four more long chapters! That is what fullness of heart can do, even when the message is not one we feel comfortable in preaching.

Jeremiah: 20:7 *"O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me. 8 For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. 9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."*

The prophet was weary of preaching rebuke to a people who would not heed and being persecuted for it, but again and again, out of the fullness of his heart his mouth spoke truth which finally came to pass. God had him to get Baruch the scribe to write it down, so that young Jews in Babylonian slavery could read it and believe God long after Jeremiah was gone from them.

Peter told his persecutors (Acts 4:20) *"we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."* Their hearts were full of those things and overflowing and their mouths could not refrain despite the threats. Such preaching is always with great power, although the responses vary.

We need more hearts full of the right things of God, whether their utterance be pleasant or difficult.

Apostle John Revelation 10:9 *"And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. 11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."*

Ezekiel experienced this long before:

Ezekiel 3:1 ¶ *Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. ... 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. 4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5 For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; 6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. 7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. 8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. 9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. 10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears."*

God's truth is sweet as honey to the lover of God, but it turns bitter when we try to proclaim what he has written in our hearts to a people who despise it. That is no excuse for us to avoid this important part of *"all the counsel of God"* (Acts 20:27) Paul said he declared to be *"free from the blood of all men."*

If our hearts are full of this right stuff we will speak it with power out of the fullness of our hearts to God's pleasure and the good of those who heed.

While immediate preparation is important, dependence on preparation which neglects the overflow of the full heart is a mistake in our ministry.

Given an hours' notice before preaching a crucial message whose opportunity you know will never come again, you can either spend the time praying or reading. Which will you choose? I know what our Baptist forefathers would say. Do you agree with them?

## Aspects of a preaching ministry:

**Evangelism** – Communicating the good message of salvation through Jesus Christ

**Teaching** = **doctrine** – instructing well in what we believe, which had better be “all things whatsoever” Jesus commanded his first disciples - “all the counsel of God,” as Paul said. Bishops (overseers or pastors = shepherds) must be “apt” (=able) teachers.

*“It has pleased God to reveal to us clearly the doctrine of the spirituality of the church, and He has taught us to avoid all beliefs and rites at variance with it. On us there has devolved the momentous duty of exemplifying this doctrine, in all its moral beauty, to the whole Christian world. Had we been true to our master and to our own principles, what blessings might we not have conferred upon the church of Christ? The wave of worldliness that has been rising so fearfully, would have beat harmlessly at our feet, and our example might have strengthened our brethren of other denominations to check its destructive progress.”*  
Elder Francis Wayland, 1856 (from page 176 of Notes on the Practices and Principles of Baptist Churches)  
In brief, Our doctrine is right! If we will practice what it says, it will work.

**Exposition** – explaining verse by verse the true meaning and intent of Holy Scripture

**Exhortation** - urging and encouraging people to do the right things they already know they ought to do

**Reproof** - (2 Timothy 4:2 & 3:16) to speak in disapproval to convict of wrong doing or thinking

**Rebuke** - (2 Timothy 4:2) sharply reprove or reprimand

**Correction** - (2 Timothy 3:16) = discipline = restoration to an upright state and improvement of life and character.

**Oration** ?? – formal and skilled public speaking designed to be eloquent and persuasive (webster)

Paul wrote that he did not “*preach the gospel with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.*” (1st Corinthians 1:17-18) The possibility of rendering the “*preaching* (literally *λογος* = “word”) of the cross” of Christ, which “*unto us which are saved is the power (= enabling) of God*” unto salvation ineffective, ought to strike all of us with Godly fear. If Paul feared to do so, dare we attempt it?? In contrast to attempted eloquence, Paul reminded them, “*And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power (= enabling) of God.*” (1st Corinthians 1:3-5)

I do not want us to become guilty of the very falsehood we have often been accused of, that is, trying to teach young preachers how to preach, instead of letting God do it, with a little advice from our own experience and God's word.

Was Franklin Association trying to teach its preachers how to preach? Or how not to preach? Or demanding that they let God preach through them, “out of the fullness of a right heart”?