

LETTER FROM THE PASTOR – August 2022

The Bible Belongs to Every Age

By Stephen Nichols, Ligonier Ministries

In 1734 and 1735, Jonathan Edwards and the congregation at Northampton experienced a revival. So did many other churches in the Connecticut River Valley in the colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts. In the fall of 1733, Edwards preached some hard-hitting sermons. One of them, preached in November 1733, has been titled “The Kind of Preaching People Want.” Edwards starts his sermon in the Old Testament, observing that God’s people have had no shortage of false prophets, “that always flattered them in their sins.” True prophets rebuke the sinner. False prophets leave sinners “to the peaceable enjoyment of their sins.” He then turns to the desire that people in his own day had for such false prophets. Edwards continues, “If ministers were sent to tell the people that they might gratify their lusts without danger... how eagerly would they be listened to by some, and what good attention they would give.” He adds, “They would like a savior to save them in their sins much better than a savior to save them from their sins.”

Edwards was responding to those of his day who thought they knew better than the Word of God. He also wrote treatises to respond to the academics who thought they knew better than God’s Word. The English academic world of Edwards’ day was enthralled with the new thinking of the Enlightenment. The deists ruled. They believed that God created the world and then backed away, and now He lets it run along all on its own. They rejected the idea that God reveals His will in His Word. They rejected the doctrine of the incarnation and the deity of Christ. They rejected the possibility, let alone the actual occurrence, of miracles. They had “come of age.” The Enlightenment thinkers and the deists were far too sophisticated to submit to some ancient book.

The philosophers had affected the church. In 1727, a group of independent ministers met in London to debate the deity of Christ. These were the exact descendants of the stalwart Puritans of the 1600s. They voted on the deity of Christ, and the deity of Christ lost. These were men who should have known better. They capitulated to the whims of the day.

Edwards kept up with these developments. He was not a backwoods minister. He had the latest books and kept current with the latest ideas. He saw where these ideas would take the church in the American Colonies. He sounded the alarm. He also saw how his congregation could be so easily led astray by the wrong pursuits.

He saw how worldliness crouched at the door, ready to overtake those who so willingly gave in.

So, he was not in a Puritan bubble. He responded to his culture and to his congregation. He preached sermons and he wrote books—all defending the Bible.

We are not historically situated at the dawn of the Enlightenment as Edwards was. We find our place at the Enlightenment's setting sun. We live in the dawn of postmodernism. We live among those who reject the Bible. We live among those who give in to the clutches of worldliness. Sin crouches at our door too.

So what pastoral counsel did Edwards offer? He pointed his congregation to the Bible. He argued against the Enlightenment thinkers and against the deist theologians based on the Bible. He looked to the Word.

As Edwards noted, the Bible belongs to every age. It is not simply the true Word for the first century. It is not simply the authoritative Word for the first century. It is not simply the necessary Word for the first century. It is not simply the sufficient Word for the first century.

It is the true, authoritative, necessary, clear, and sufficient Word for all centuries, including the twenty-first. Theologians sometimes speak of these as the attributes of Scripture. As the attributes of God help us to learn about God, the attributes of Scripture help us learn about Scripture. The first and foremost attribute of Scripture is its authority. Scripture is authoritative. We again hear Peter Martyr Vermigli remind us that it all comes down to "Thus says the Lord." If Scripture is the Word of God, it's authoritative.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LBC

BIBLE STUDIES – Both the Wednesday evening and Ladies Bible Study are paused for the summer months. We look forward to reconvening in the Fall!

SCENT FREE – Due to severe allergies within the congregation, we ask that we keep our worship gathering scent free. We appreciate everyone’s help in keeping our gatherings a safe environment.

FOOD PANTRY – We now have a food pantry drop off box located at the back of the sanctuary. This will allow us to regularly support the local food bank and help show the love of Christ through meeting practical needs. We have asked the Food Bank to provide us with a list of needed items. We will make that available once it is passed along to us.

EVENING SERVICE – Please join us on Sunday August 28th at 7pm for a time of worship, teaching and corporate prayer.