

# The Devil's Favorite Sermons

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The devil does not mind preaching that much. In fact, there are sermons that he likes.

Since the power is in the Word (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12), he only fears sermons that effectively communicate Scripture. When the scriptures that are employed are taken out of context or misapplied (2 Peter 3:16), he likes the sermon very much. When more attention is paid to drawing a large crowd than to preaching sound doctrine (Titus 2:1), he can sit happily through the sermon.

When the theatrical presentation supersedes the sermon's content, he knows the "great swelling words of emptiness" are merely clouds without water (2 Peter 2:18; Jude 1:12–13; Matthew 23:5). When the church with feigned[1] words "makes merchandise" of those attending, he likes the church service quite well (2 Peter 2:3).

The devil likes weak preaching. Weak preaching is dangerous.

**Weak preaching leads to a lack of conversions.** A non-gospel preacher cannot bring men to Christ when he deletes the power from his sermon (Romans 1:16). It is tragic for lost souls who desperately need to hear the gospel (Mark 16:15–16) to leave a meeting or worship service without knowing that they are lost and how to be saved. The souls of men are at stake. If gospel preaching saves (I Corinthians 1:18), then non-gospel preaching condemns. Let us "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). Abraham spoke from Paradise to say, "They have Moses and the

prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). Preachers today have Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, so they should "let them hear them"! (Romans 10:14).

**Weak preaching causes weakened faith.** Christians are built up by a steady and strong diet of the Word (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 5:12–14). If they are not fed, how long will they remain healthy?

**Weak preaching eventually leads to church problems.** The reason churches are being torn apart by false doctrine today is a lack of distinctive preaching yesterday. When "What Can I Do to Improve My Self-Esteem?" replaces "What Must I Do to Be Saved?" it is only a matter of time. When doctrinal sermons on fundamental issues are old-fashioned, it will not be long until women are put in leadership roles, instruments are used in the early service, and the Lord's Supper is taken once a month. Since sincere people do better when they are taught better, the best preventive for church problems is a strong pulpit.

**Weak preaching causes confusion and misunderstandings.** When uncertain sounds (1 Corinthians 14:7–10) come from the bugle, an army panics. Weak preaching makes weak Christians. Weak Christians walk out of meeting house doors unequipped to cope with the god of this world. Confused Christians are unprepared to meet the false doctrine of the denominational world.

On the other hand, there is nothing the devil fears more than strong preaching. It is God's power to save (1 Corinthians 1:18). Sermons filled with Scriptures, well explained and effectively communicated, are the ruination of the devil's purposes.

**Strong preaching helps hearers learn the Bible.** Paul wrote to the young preacher, "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). One of preaching's purposes is teaching. Pseudo-preachers are like

Elymus who wanted to withhold the truth from Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:8). If preachers do not let hearers “search the Scriptures” for themselves (Acts 17:11), are they obeying God?

**Strong preaching shows respect for biblical authority (Colossians 3:17).** Hearers are reminded that the preacher is not speaking of himself (John 7:16; 8:28; 14:10), or asserting his own ideas (1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 1:20–21), but rather permitting God to speak for Himself (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

**Strong preaching helps avoid misapplication (2 Peter 3:16).** Error is often undetectable when disguised in a few familiar-sounding biblical words or phrases severed from their original context. When honest truth-seekers are given an opportunity to investigate, the truth sets men free (John 8:32). Faithful preachers have nothing to hide; they desire that listeners check on them. Since each is responsible for working out his “own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), preachers help by pointing others to Jesus (John 1:36) and His Word (Hebrews 4:12).

**Strong preaching follows the biblical precedent.** Jesus often said, “It is written” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) and “found the place where it was written” (Luke 4:16–17) before beginning to preach. Peter’s sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2) had quotations from Joel 2:28–30, Psalm 16:8–11, 110:1, and 2 Samuel 7:11–12.

**Strong preaching fulfills the purpose of preaching (2 Timothy 4:2).** As farmers, preachers are to sow the word (Luke 8:11; Acts 20:32). The power to save men is in the gospel (Romans 1:16; 2 Corinthians 12:9; John 8:32; Ephesians 6:17). It is not in money (Acts 3:6), men (Acts 4:13), or popularity (Acts 28:20).

Paul faced the problem at Corinth where men preached themselves rather than the Word. He wrote, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians

1:18).

The Master said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself" (John 12:32). Preaching "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2) is the focal point of the message. Paul wrote, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20) and "shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:16).

Across the front of many communion tables read the words, "This Do in Remembrance of Me." In the early days of the Restoration Movement, it was not uncommon to see inscribed across pulpits the exhortation, "Preach the Word."

[1] *Feigned* (*plastois*, from which "plastic" comes) describes something insincere.