

“One Untaught Generation ...”

“One untaught generation in the church will result in apostasy.” These are the words of an old soldier of the cross who has been preaching for nearly twice as many years as I have been alive. Are they the words of unreasoned fear and foolish panic, or do they represent years of experience and a good understanding of human weakness?

Another old soldier wrote the following in a book for young preachers: “Premillennialism hit the twenties and thirties hard. Institutionalism ... hit the forties and fifties hard. Entertainment on the church property ... hit the sixties hard. The bus mania, with the carnival spirit, and the junior church are hitting the seventies hard. You may ask what will disturb the eighties and nineties and beyond. I lack the wisdom to tell you, but the devil is not asleep. Be ready young men to war a good warfare. As problems approach, even among churches that are presently faithful, study the false doctrine, observe the devil’s devices, and discover the cunning craftiness by which his servants lie in wait to deceive. Remember that the battle is for souls. Save them if you can. Good elders, sound and courageous preachers, and many brethren with honest and good hearts can defend the cause” (Irven Lee, *Preaching in a Changing World*, pg. 170).

Brother Lee wrote these words in 1975 and could not see the error that would be promoted in the years to come. Nevertheless, his prediction that false doctrine would be taught has certainly come true. In the 1980’s, we heard brethren preach a new definition of fellowship that softened the boundaries between matters of doctrine and individual conscience. We heard error taught with regard to divorce; error that denied the accountability of sinners before God; error that rejected the need for complete repentance; error that has the potential to encourage the weak to engage adultery and fornication. The false doctrine of “Individualism” advocated that there is no such thing as a local church, ordained elders in local churches, preachers in local churches, nor treasuries in local churches. In other words, everyone worships in their own homes as individuals.

In the 1990’s, we are hearing of old errors cloaked in new robes. “Realized Eschatology” teaches that the resurrection is already past. Also called the “70 A.D. Doctrine” or “The Max King Theory,” it states that the second coming of the Lord occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem. This is nothing but warmed over, diluted premillennialism. “Neo-Perfectionism” advocates the sinless perfection of man without Christ; that one has the capacity to live from birth to death without ever committing a single sin. And, to prove this error, its proponents teach that Jesus Christ was “just a man, a mere man;

an ordinary guy like me." It reasons that Jesus as a man, stripped of all vestiges of His divine nature, was able to live perfectly, and therefore we can too. Oh yes, we have had our share of doctrines of devils in the eighties and nineties.

Now, when one asks the preacher, "Why are you preaching on instrumental music," the preacher should respond, "because one untaught generation in the Church will result in apostasy." I have been asked for the reasoning behind a number of my sermons: institutionalism, fellowship halls, and gymnasiums, local church discipline, divorce and remarriage, denominational error, faith only, first principles, etc. The question is usually followed with the statement, "We do not have a problem with that here, so why preach on it?" The answer is "one untaught generation in the church will result in apostasy."

Campbell, Stone, and many others came out of denominational error and encouraged people to become just Christians, people who would ask for a "*Thus saith the Lord*" in all that they say and do in service to God. Book, chapter and verse characterized what they taught. And the next generation developed the missionary society, and the generation after that introduced the mechanical instrument of music, and the generation after that taught Premillennialism, and the generation after that invented the Herald of Truth, and the generation after that supported human institutions, and the generation after that developed the doctrine of "food, fun, frolic, and fellowship," and in the decade after that false doctrine was taught on the marriage question, and the decade after that error was preached on the resurrection and judgment, and on the Deity of Christ and sinless perfection of man.

When we reach into the next century, what error will some promote? guess is as good as mine. Brother Lee's warning about the sleepless nature of the devil still holds true. Satan will find something to lead one untaught generation into doctrinal error and upheaval!

Adapted From Paul Blake