

I am sorry for this interruption in the series on "The Speaking God," but the newspaper wrote an article that I could not resist commenting on. In a week or so we will be back on track!

Stupid preacher! Shouldn't done that!

He was going home to have a meal with his wife, whizzing along in his '94 Chrysler. That's when he saw the guy thumbing a ride, going in his direction. Without thinking he pulled his big car over and told the guy to get in. He had been doing that as long as anyone could remember. His family didn't like it, picking up Lord knows who these days. The police warn us about letting strangers get into our car; the percentage of no-goods is really high on the side of the road. But he did it anyway. To the stupid old preacher the person with his thumb out was just another call from Macedonia; "Come over and help us." And "help" us he would.

The 76 year-old preacher didn't show up for lunch; he didn't call to say he would be late. He should have been chugging down a second piece of pie when police were roping off a crime scene at the side of the road, not far from an overpass. The old Pentecostal preacher was hanging part way out of his car. There were signs of a struggle inside the automobile. He had been shot in the head and chest. Well, he wouldn't pick up any more hitchhikers wanting to go in his direction.

As I sat at the breakfast table reading about this tragedy I had a flashback to when I was a young "preacher boy" myself. That's what they called all young aspiring preachers in the scrubs of East Texas. "Preacher boy." Not far from my church an older minister, Pentecostal at that, stopped his car on a beautiful fall afternoon and picked up a young hitchhiker. They later found the preacher dead...shot to death. Too many similarities, I read about this before, some 50 or so years ago. Stupid preacher; should 'a known better.

It was interesting to me that the preacher in Kentucky had all of his belongings except his bible. Did whoever killed him take his bible as a souvenir? Is there a possibility the murderer will read some of that bible, especially those passages underlined by the preacher and repent of his wicked deed? Can this preacher's death be the channel of God's grace to a person who otherwise might never have seriously considered the love of Jesus? After all, the death of Jesus was (and is) indeed the channel of grace to many, many people, young and old. Why did these old preachers pick up hitchhikers? I know the answer to that: the mercy of God. They wanted others to know of God, who could change their lives.

The preachers weren't so stupid after all. They were willing to live with a certain amount of risk for the love of God. They didn't know they would be a kind of martyr to the faith they wanted to share with their riders. They even struggled against it. Yet they were like their Lord in one way at least: they chose to help others, in spite of the risk. As Jesus' death drew near, His disciples warned Him and wanted Him to stay away from Jerusalem. But he had to go and now we are glad he did.

When I finished the article in the paper, I thought of the temptations of Jesus. The devil told Jesus the way ahead of Him was filled with danger and that if the Lord just listened to Satan's advice, He could achieve the ends He wanted without danger. That, of course, was not true. My minister brothers have made the ultimate witness...and now they see the Lord face to face. Not bad for stupid old preachers.

----Jerry Mercer (1/12/08)