

Chasing Buzzard

“And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.” – Genesis 15:11

I heard someone quote an old preacher who said regarding this text, “I believe in chasing buzzards off. I don’t believe in chasing buzzards.” It seems to me that this text and the thought given by that man of God now in Heaven are especially significant to us today. It is an important part of our ministry to stand against evil (Isaiah 58:1 – “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”). It is, however, not the only part of our ministry. We are also to “feed the flock of God.” We are to “preach the Gospel to every creature.” We are to “comfort the afflicted.” We are to “weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice.” We are to “exhort one another.” We are to “comfort one another.” We are to “bear one another’s burdens.” When we focus on the buzzards, we run the risk of becoming unbalanced and even unscriptural in our ministry.



Dr. R. B. Ouellette

I was a young pastor still in my 20’s. Dr. Elmer Towns was beginning to be known for conducting Sunday School seminars. When I invited him to come and do such a seminar in our church, he was working with Dr. Curtis Hutson at the Baptist University of America in Atlanta, Georgia. By the time the seminar occurred and Dr. Towns came, he had left his position with Dr. Hutson and gone to work with Dr. Jerry Falwell. It is important to note that while at this time, there were those who had concerns about Dr. Falwell, he was still largely identified with independent, fundamental Baptist churches. He had spoken at Dr. John Rice’s funeral and at Pastor’s School in Hammond, Indiana near the time I had Dr. Towns scheduled to come for the seminar.

I was shocked to read in a newsletter under a column entitled “Did You Know?” the following “expose” . . . “First Baptist Church of Bridgeport, R. B. Ouellette pastor, has scheduled Elmer Towns for a Sunday School conference.” I remember wondering, “Why is our church of a few hundred people significant enough to be put in this man’s national paper? Why, if he thought there was a problem with me having Dr. Towns in to preach did he not speak to me about it himself? Why did he feel that I, as a young and relatively unknown pastor, having Dr. Towns in to speak was going to have any effect on the rest of the independent, fundamental Baptist world?” Now, to be fair, the man who wrote this paper is still publishing a paper. That paper includes much positive, encouraging and helpful information. Though I had never met the man at that point, I have since met him and found him to be a Christian gentleman. Yet I’ll never forget the shock I felt as a young man, realizing that I had been named negatively in a national magazine. It seems to me that this kind of “gotcha” approach is part of what drives some young men away from independent, fundamental Baptist leaders. Here are a few thoughts on this phenomenon.

1. It’s Necessary

Chasing buzzards off is necessary. When the buzzard of New Evangelicalism tries to steal from the altar the lives of young men who have sacrificed themselves to the cause of Christ, I’m going to try to chase it off. When the buzzard of the Contemporary Church tries to tell young people that rock n’ roll is right and the King James Version is wrong, I’m going to try to chase it off. When the buzzard of Calvinism comes along with its almost universal effect of weakening our zeal for souls, deadening our evangelism and squelching our support of missionaries, I intend to chase it away as rapidly as possible. We are to “look well to the state of our flock.”

2. It’s dangerous

Chasing buzzards is dangerous. Please note the distinction between “chasing buzzards off” and “chasing buzzards.” In the first instance, I’m trying to remove them from my sacrifice. In the second, I’m trying to hunt them down.

□ It's more fun to chase buzzards than it is to offer a sacrifice. Making a sacrifice is a messy job. It takes work. It's expensive. It's arduous. Chasing buzzards is a lot more exciting.

□ Chasing buzzards makes us feel important. After all, we can tell the rest of the world what we have discovered that is wrong with someone. We are now investigative reporters, "Pastor Police," and in some cases, we may even perceive ourselves as the Inspector General of fundamentalism

□ Chasing buzzards often becomes personal. If someone does not heed our unsolicited advice or regard our unrequested warning, it really becomes our desire to "straighten them out."

Many years ago, a pastor wrote me a letter warning me about a particular preacher. Because his accusations were not proven and did not have the Scripturally-required two or three witnesses, and because they were inconsistent with what I had observed about this man's life, I kindly responded to his letter but did not come to the same conclusions as he had. When, a few months later, I had that man in my pulpit, this dear brother went after me. He wrote, "I warned you about this man and you still had him!" He went on to say that he had now forbidden his church members to attend any meeting at our church or to attend any meeting where I was preaching! (I've always wondered how a pastor could have so much power and influence that he could "forbid" his members from attending another service.)

3. It's Exposing

Chasing buzzards leaves the sacrifice unprotected. Abraham's goal was to give an offering to God. The buzzards interfered with his giving the offering. He therefore chased them away. If, however, like some people, he had devoted himself to chasing the buzzards, the offering would be vulnerable to the attack of any other enemy. I wonder how many souls we fail to win while we're writing scathing letters of rebuke against our brethren? I wonder how many sermons we're not preparing while we are "doing research" to learn everything wrong that we possibly can about someone we have determined to be a danger to the cause of Christ? I wonder how often we have invested ourselves emotionally in a particular issue and allowed our concern to be one of personality rather than of principle?

4. It's Secondary

Chasing buzzards is not our main responsibility. I want to take a stand. I want to be clear in my opposition to wrong Bible translations, liberal and compromising tendencies, ungodly philosophies and sin of every kind. However, my ultimate responsibility is to "preach the Gospel to every creature." It is to make disciples of men and women and boys and girls and train them to live for the Lord Jesus Christ. If I could chase every buzzard down, blow its head off with my spiritual shotgun and hang its bloody carcass on a post someplace for all to see, I would not have fulfilled the Great Commission. I'm against the buzzards when they come around. I intend to chase them away. But I plan to spend most of my time making the sacrifice . . . for what it's worth.