

Don Walker as a Preacher
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I remember very well the first time I heard Don Walker preach the Word. I could tell he had a fire in his bones to get the message out (Jer. 20:9). He spoke with clarity and conviction. As he quoted passage after passage, and tied the Scriptures together so effectively, I knew I didn't want it to be the last time I heard him preach. And fortunately for me, it wasn't. Little did I know, at the time, that I would be blessed, not only to hear Don preach many, many, times in the future, but I would also get the privilege of getting to know him as a dear, dear friend. My assigned focus in this article is to put the spotlight on Don as a preacher.

One of Don's favorite passages was Psalm 34:3: "O magnify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together." This verse meant much to both Don and Jackie—it was a theme verse for their wedding and marriage. What a fitting verse it is also for the way that he lived his life, and the way that he preached.

DON'S PREACHING MAGNIFIED GOD

One of Don's favorite songs was O Lord, Our Lord, How Excellent Is Thy Name. This is not surprising, for his preaching was very focused on magnifying the excellence of God. In his preaching...

He magnified the power of God. One of Don's favorite books of the Bible was the Book of Ephesians. This book extols the power of God in unforgettable fashion, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20). Don emphasized the greatness of God and lifted him up. In so doing, Don deemphasized man and magnified God!

He magnified the presence of God. He loved the Book of Psalms and often quoted its contents: "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble (Ps. 46:1). Don knew how to comfort the heavy-hearted by using the Word of God to make the hearer aware of the comforting presence of God: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings as eagles; They shall run, and not be weary; And they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

DON'S PREACHING MAGNIFIED THE WORD OF GOD

Don's first sermon at Prescott Valley in Arizona provided a preview of the kind of preacher Don would become. He cited 150 scriptures in 15 minutes, and then realized he was at the end of his outline. However, he didn't want to cut the sermon so short—so he preached the same content backwards to where he had started the sermon, once again emphasizing the same Scriptures in reverse order! Paul told Timothy to "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2), and that is precisely what Don Walker did—from his first sermon to the last. He saturated his sermons with Scripture!

The only way to preach so much Scripture, and to do so effectively, is to be thoroughly familiar with the Word of God. Don's love for study reminds me of the description in Proverbs 2 of the one who cried after knowledge, and sought it like silver and a buried treasure

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, And hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, And apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, And liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, And

searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God (Pro. 2:1–5).

Because Don spent so much time in the Word, he could "speak as the oracles of God" and, in so doing, he glorified God "through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11).

DON'S PREACHING MAGNIFIED JESUS CHRIST

I absolutely loved hearing Don teach/preach through the Book of John. To say that these were Christ-exalting presentations is an understatement! One of Don's specialties was exalting Jesus Christ in his preaching. Like Paul, he did not enter the pulpit with "excellency of speech or of wisdom" in declaring the testimony of God. Rather, his whole focus was to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-2). He developed and directed an entire lectureship on the subject of Exalting Jesus Christ.

The following statement, from the pen of the apostle Paul, is also descriptive of Don as a preacher and as a Christian: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing shall I be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20-21). Don believed and preached that God would supply all of man's needs "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Of course, man's greatest need is that of salvation, and Don preached the truth uncompromisingly about where this salvation can be found. He preached, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: (Eph. 2:4–6).

DON'S PREACHING MAGNIFIED THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

It was my privilege to attend a Wednesday Night Bible Class, which Don taught on the Book of Ephesians. He knew that Book backwards, forwards, sideways, and every which way in between. It was thrilling to hear Don explain how Jesus reconciled sinners unto Himself in one body by the cross (Eph. 2:14-18). It was a joy to hear Don magnify the Head of the body (Eph. 1:22-23), and His one body as the location of the saved (Eph. 4:4; 5:23).

Don never preached the Man without the Plan, or the Plan apart from the Man Christ Jesus. Don magnified both the Christ of the church and the church of the Christ! He loved the church for which Christ bled and died (Acts 20:28).

DON'S PREACHING MAGNIFIED THE HOPE OF HEAVEN

Long before he fell ill, Don had a way of making Heaven come alive in his preaching. His passion for going there made every hearer yearn even more for Heaven than before. Although Don desired to stay here on earth and continue his work of preaching, and his time with his family and friends, he was fully confident of what would happen to him at the moment of his departure from this life (Phil. 1:21-23). He trusted in the guarantee of Jesus Christ: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. (John 12:24–25). He believed that Jesus meant it when He said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18).

Don suffered much in the physical realm as he fought for his life, but he believed and preached the following truth: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Don loved preaching so much that one of the very hardest parts of being sick for him is that he missed the opportunities to preach. Month after month he was in the hospital, unable to preach. But in reality, Don was preaching one of the best sermons ever! His life was preaching a loud and clear message to the Doctors, Nurses, Hospital Staff, and those who came to visit him. The conclusion to his living sermon could not be silenced by his death, for he died victoriously (1 Cor. 15:53-57)! He was ready to be offered! He fought a good fight! He finished his course! He kept the faith! Henceforth, his death was not the end of Don Walker. It was rather a means to an end, that end being the crown of life, given to him by the same Lord Jesus Whom he magnified in the preaching he did, both by his lips and by his life! What a sermon!