

I am a Debtor. I am Ready. I am not Ashamed
A Tribute to Don Walker
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I'll never forget the first time I heard Don Walker preach. It was April 2005 at the Annual Southwest Lectureship. The title of his lesson was "Authentic Christianity and Moral Purity for Today." I sat in the audience that night in utter amazement at the power and conviction with which our brother preached. His command of the Scripture, his boldness, his reverence for God and His Word, everything about him was utterly captivating. I have listened to the recording of that sermon many times since then, and each time is just as thrilling as the first.

If someone had told me that night that Don Walker would soon become one of my dearest friends, I would never have believed it. But today, I can say unequivocally that he impacted my life so powerfully, it is difficult to put into words. In August of 2007 I began as a student in the Southwest School of Bible Studies. In the second quarter of my first year, Don began teaching in a part time capacity. At the beginning of the third quarter, he began working as a full time instructor. It is difficult to describe how effective Don was as a teacher but those who studied under him know very well. Inside the classroom, he was firm but fair. He had the ability to make God's word come alive. He knew the scripture and he loved it deeply. He was passionate about teaching and preaching and that came out in every class he taught, but especially in his favorites—Leviticus, Ephesians, and the Messiahship of Christ, just to name a few. Outside of the classroom he was a student's best friend. He loved to joke and have a good time, but also knew when to be serious. He constantly encouraged us, but also sat us down and gave us a firm rebuke if the situation demanded it. I remember spending a lot of time in his office, talking to him about life, decisions, struggles, and whatever else happened to be on my mind. To this day I have no idea what he saw in me that made him take the time and extend the patience to listen to me and help me as much as he did, but I'm thankful that he did.

When I think of Don there is one section of scripture that always comes to my mind—Romans 1:14-16.

I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

I can still hear him quoting that passage and emphasizing, "I am a debtor, I am ready, and I am not ashamed!" I can think of no other passage of scripture that better describes him. Don knew what it meant to be a "debtor." He knew well the grace and mercy of God and had tasted the goodness of the Lord (1 Pet. 2:3). He was so thankful for the blood of Christ, and the power of the gospel, and how it had changed his life. The Lord was good to him and he never forgot it. Don was always "ready" to preach the gospel. He loved God's Word and he knew it well. He was a diligent student and he always had a thought or a passage of scripture on his mind that he wanted to talk about and work through with you. We would often call each other to discuss an article we read or a sermon we heard, to work through and study it together. Some of my fondest memories are listening to sermons together on road trips and reflecting on what was said. Don loved preaching and

anyone who knew him at all knew it well. He had a passion to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus, and he was certainly “not ashamed” to do so. One of my favorite sermons of his is titled “Boldness Amidst Skepticism.” It was another masterpiece delivered at the annual Southwest Lectures. The sermon begins with him saying, “Were there no God in heaven, then every fool would be a wise man. Had God not left His fingerprints all over creation, then skepticism would make sense. Had God not given a more sure word of prophecy, unbelief would be admirable. Had our loving Father not sent His Son to die on the cross for the salvation of the souls of men, then adamant rejection and the vehement anger directed toward the imposter would be a proper response. However, the atheist is still a fool. The skeptic is still unreasonable and he must stand against the mountains of evidence that proclaims the divine truths, the great truths, that you and I believe, that we love, that we honor, and that we ought to be ready and willing to defend.”

My brother was not ashamed to say what needed to be said. He loved the truth and hated error and firmly believed that men need to hear a “thus saith the Lord.” Don had no tolerance for false doctrine or pulpit shenanigans. He knew that we are in the midst of a constant spiritual battle where the souls of men hang in the balance. The truth must be taught, error must be engaged, and souls must be saved. Don knew that and he was not ashamed to answer the call to be God’s mouthpiece. He was a debtor, he was ready, and he was not ashamed to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ—and thank God for it.

There is so much more that could be said about Don Walker. I could talk about fishing trips, road trips, gospel meetings, lectureships, phone calls, disagreements, pranks, and so much more. I owe him so much. Without his influence, I likely would not be preaching, I would not have my wife and children, and I would have made bad decision after bad decision over the last decade of my life. He taught me, he counseled me, and he helped me in so many ways that I cannot imagine what my life would be like without his fingerprints all over it. I don’t even want to try. I loved him dearly and I thank God for the relationship we had. He was a great mentor, a loyal friend, a powerful preacher, a devoted husband, a loving father, a faithful child of God, and so much more. I look forward to the seeing him again some day, but until then, his constant exhortation stands as a reminder. “I am a debtor. I am ready. I am not ashamed!”