

## THE LIMITS OF TEACHING



Jim Cymbala April 11, 2015

Let me make a bold statement: Christianity is not predominantly a teaching religion. We have been almost overrun these days by the cult of the speaker. The person who can stand up and expound correct doctrine is viewed as essential; without such a talent the church would not know what to do. The North American church has made the sermon the centerpiece of the meeting, rather than the throne of grace, where God acts in people's lives.

The Jewish faith in Jesus' day was dominated by rabbis—teachers of the Law. Their doctrine was thorough. Jesus told them “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that *by them* you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:39-40, italics added). They knew the written Word of God very well, but not the living Word, even as He stood before them.

The Scriptures are not so much the goal as they are an arrow that points us to the life-changing Christ.

Unfortunately, the rabbis never did realize who was among them. In the last few days before His crucifixion, Jesus wept over the city as He said, “You did not recognize the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:44).

It is fine to explain about God, but far too few people today are experiencing the living Christ in their lives. We are not seeing God's visitation in our gatherings. We are not on the lookout for His outstretched hand.

The teaching of sound doctrine is a prelude, if you will, to the supernatural. It is also a guide, a set of boundaries to keep emotion and exuberance within proper channels.

But as Paul said, “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6). If the Holy Spirit is not given an opening among us, if His work is not welcomed, if we are afraid of what He might do, we leave ourselves with nothing but death.

Jim Cymbala began Brooklyn Tabernacle with less than twenty members in a small, rundown building in a difficult part of the city. A native of Brooklyn and longtime friend of both David and Gary Wilkerson, Cymbala is a frequent speaker at the Expect Church Leadership Conferences sponsored by World Challenge throughout the world.

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