

The Bradford Pear, Red Oak, and Old-fashioned Doctrinal Preaching...



Here is a churchy sounding term – *Needs based preaching*. You may not be familiar with the term, but you almost certainly know what it is when you hear it. Most likely, you have heard it within the past couple of weeks, because it is a very popular preaching trend in American evangelical pulpits. Needs based preaching and the ubiquitous Bradford Pear tree have become staples on the evangelical suburban landscape. The Bradford Pear is the quick-fix tree for beautifying your yard. It is pleasing to the eye, especially in the spring and fall, grows quickly, has dense foliage, and is cheap. On the other hand, the old-fashioned Red Oak is not nearly as popular as it used to be. It does not bear beautiful flowers in the spring or have stunning foliage in the fall. It grows way too slowly for the average ten-second sound bite (bite?) evangelical, and is not easy to find or cheap to purchase. So?

So, the Bradford Pear, for all its beauty and popularity, carries a flaw within its genetic makeup. Its branches are not strongly bound to the trunk, and the wood is exceptionally soft and brittle. Consequently, it does not hold up well in a storm (and its beautiful flowers smell kind of like a dead robin). In fact, any one who has ever had a rather large one in their yard knows they tend to split apart even in a moderately strong storm. Contrast Bradford Pears with Red Oaks. Red Oaks are, well, strong as an oak, and the red oak

does not waste itself by growing dense stinky flowers.

Needs based preaching seems to be producing a kind of Bradford Pear church member. During fair weather and favorable growing conditions, they are first-rate, but when the inevitable storms of life come, they have a tendency to split. Old-fashioned doctrinal preaching is much more likely to produce a kind of Red Oak Christian. They may not be flashy, but they are tough and dependable in the storm. Get it?



In "My Utmost for His Highest," Oswald Chambers warned, "*Never water down the word of God, preach it in its undiluted sternness; there must be unflinching loyalty to the word of God.*" He would no doubt have disapproved of Bradford Pear type preaching,

but fully approved the following contrast.

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (II Timothy 4:1-5 NASV).

Editor's Note about *ArkRocker VIEWPOINT*:
The content of this column will always be very thought provoking, stimulating and maybe even a challenge or call to action. The author will never be revealed, so don't ask because we'll never tell.
