

What is the Foundation, Relevance, and Purpose of Biblical Preaching Today?

Introduction

When it comes to the subject of preaching, twenty-first century America seems to be in a quandary. A seemingly paradoxical fog has slithered over the country, and due to American preachers global influence, this fog has been quietly creeping over the entire world. As a result, there is an obvious misunderstanding as to what the very essence of preaching is. What is preaching anyhow? And what is the foundation and relevance of preaching today?

A majority of those in the church are ignorant concerning this subject. The average person on the street has not a clue about what a biblical preacher is. Therefore, it is this task that we will embark on. First and foremost, we must define what preaching is. Though it might seem obvious, nevertheless it must be stated that no person's opinion, feeling, or reasoning on the matter will be sufficient. Only the Word of God can give us a proper definition of preaching, and in the spirit of the Apostles, Church Fathers and Reformation we will submit to *sola Scriptura*.

A Scriptural Definition of Preaching

The Apostle Paul knew his time was coming to an end. His death was imminent, for he was “already being poured out as a drink offering” (2 Tim. 4:6). As he sat in a Roman prison he issued many critical commands to a young Pastor named Timothy. In the last chapter of perhaps his last letter written the Apostle to the Gentiles wrote to his “beloved and faithful child in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17) saying:

Διαμαρτύρομαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ μέλλοντος κρίνειν ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, καὶ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ· **κήρυξον τὸν λόγον**, ἐπίστηθι εὐκαίρως ἀκαίρως, ἔλεγχον, ἐπιτίμησον, παρακάλεσον, ἐν πάσῃ μακροθυμίᾳ καὶ διδαχῇ.

I 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**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Tim. 4:1-2)

As these words are read, the weightiness and emotion contained in them are evident. Paul gives his last and most intense testimony to “his beloved child” Timothy (2 Tim. 1:1). It has been properly suggested that the strong term Διαμαρτύρομαι “I charge you” has more of the idea of Paul earnestly testifying as opposed to merely giving a charge. The seriousness of this plea to Timothy is to stir him up more than ever, for Paul brings this solemn testimony “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus.”

In addition, Paul adds the apposition τοῦ μέλλοντος κρίνειν ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς “who is to judge the living and the dead.” Thus, in the very presence of Christ, who will soon judge the living and the dead, Paul brings this ever so important testimony before Timothy. And if this were not serious enough the Apostle strengthens it to the fullest testifying by the glorious appearance of Christ and his kingdom!

There is no doubt Timothy recognized the gravity of what Paul was now going to lay before him. In verse two we see five imperatives (i.e. commands) given by Paul to Timothy. By way of extension these imperatives are also given to all ministers of the gospel by the Holy Spirit.

The first imperative given is, κήρυξον τὸν λόγον “preach the word!” The Apostle Paul uses the word κήρυξον, which is a second person singular aorist active imperative. This word comes from the verb κηρύσσω meaning to proclaim aloud, announce, mention publicly, or preach.¹ This imperative is grammatically connected with the second imperative ἐπίστηθι εὐκαιρῶς ἀκαιρῶς, ἔλεγξον “be ready in season and out of season.” The connecting of these two commands implies that the proclamation of the gospel which was given to Timothy, and likewise to us, is one that is proper to preach in every season.

Thus, κήρυξον is our subject at hand. As we will see, almost every form of this word has to do with proclaiming or heralding the good news of God. This is illustrated in the gospel narratives regarding John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles themselves.

Preaching in the New Testament

John the Baptist

The New Testament unmistakably declares that παραγίνεται Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστὴς κηρύσσων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας “John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea” (Matt. 3:1). Mark opens his gospel by stating that John appeared baptizing in the wilderness and κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν “and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4).

To those living in land of Israel, John was known as a preacher, and his content was inextricably linked to the Person and Work of Messiah (Mark 1:7; Luke 3:3; Acts 10:37). John was the greatest prophet yet to be revealed (Matt. 11:11). He was the messenger

¹ Wilbur. F. Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament 2nd Edition* (Revised by Frederick W. Danker The University of Chicago Press. Chicago. 1983).

Though we will focus our analysis on κηρύσσω it is not the only term in Scripture which conveys the idea of preaching. The verb εὐαγγελίζω “I bring or announce good news” is used over 50 times in the New Testament and means to proclaim or preach the Gospel. Other terms such as ἀναγγέλλω “I report” is used over 200 times, and μαρτυρέω “I bear witness” is used over 80 times. These words all express a declaring of the things of God.

sent by God Himself to prepare the way of Messiah, fulfilling what the prophet Isaiah wrote, “Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” (Mark 1:2-3 c.f. Isaiah 40:3)

Jesus the Messiah

In addition to John the Baptist, there is also never any dispute about the preaching ministry of Jesus. Preaching the good news of God was tied to the very reason He came (Mark 1:38). Immediately after the Lord Jesus’ baptism in the Holy Spirit and temptation it is said that ὁ Ἰησοῦς **κηρύσσειν** καὶ λέγειν· μετανοεῖτε· ἤγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν “Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 4:17)

This is exactly what was to be expected after Jesus declared fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2a. He declared unto all those in the synagogue:

πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, ἀπέσταλκέν με, **κηρύξαι** αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν, ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει, **κηρύξαι** ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus ministry was characterized by such things as the preaching of the “good news to the poor,” “liberty to the captives,” and proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor.” This He would do all throughout the land during His ministry by teaching in the synagogues (Luke 4:44) and **κηρύσσων** τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.” (Matt. 4:23; 11:1)

The Disciples of Jesus

In Matthew chapter ten, Jesus instructed His disciples to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel πορευόμενοι δὲ **κηρύσσετε** λέγοντες ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. “And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (10:7; c.f. Mark 3:14). The disciples did that very thing (Luke 9:2). Mark records one occasion, Καὶ ἐξελθόντες **ἐκήρυξαν** ἵνα μετανοώσιν “So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent” (Mark 6:12). Jesus also spoke of his disciples proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom to the entire world. (Matt 24:14; c.f. Luke 24:47)

We see this happening as Philip δὲ κατελθὼν εἰς [τὴν] πόλιν τῆς Σαμαρείας **ἐκήρυσσεν** αὐτοῖς τὸν Χριστόν “went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ” (Acts 8:5). And of course, after his radical conversion on the Damascus road, Saul ταῖς συναγωγαῖς **ἐκήρυσσεν** τὸν Ἰησοῦν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν

ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. “immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” (Acts 9:20)

Other People

Furthermore, the New Testament uses this verb **κηρύσσω** in connection with other people as well. For example, the Lord Jesus cast out demons from the man at the Gerasenes, who then went away *καὶ ἀπῆλθεν καθ’ ὅλην τὴν πόλιν κηρύσσων ὅσα ἐποίησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς*. “And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him” (Luke 8:39). Similarly, after healing the deaf man Jesus commanded the crowd not to tell anyone what took place. Yet, *ὅσον δὲ αὐτοῖς διεστέλλετο, αὐτοὶ μᾶλλον περισσότερον ἐκήρυσσον*. “But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it” (Mark 7:36).

Therefore, a quick look at the New Testament evidence with respect to the term **κηρύσσω** gives us a definition of preaching as the announcing or heralding of the good news concerning the truth of Christ. One of the greatest preachers of the twentieth century, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, asserted that “any true definition of preaching must say that that man is there to deliver the message of God, a message from God to those people.”²

The Apostle Paul

The Apostle Paul crystallized this in his letter to the Romans when he speaks about τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως ὃ **κηρύσσομεν** “the word of faith that we proclaim” (Rom. 10:8). After exalting Jesus as Lord and ascribing to Him the very qualities that are predicated to God, the Apostle states that by putting their trust in Jesus nobody will ever be put to shame (Rom. 10:11). He then writes in verses 14-15:

Πῶς οὖν ἐπικαλέσονται εἰς ὃν οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν; πῶς δὲ πιστεύσωσιν οὗ οὐκ ἤκουσαν; πῶς δὲ ἀκούσωσιν χωρὶς **κηρύσσοντος**; πῶς δὲ **κηρύξωσιν** ἐὰν μὴ ἀποσταλῶσιν; καθὼς γέγραπται· ὡς ὠραῖοι οἱ πόδες τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων [τὰ] ἀγαθά.

But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

The Apostle Paul declares that a heralding of the good news concerning the facts of Christ Jesus is necessary for one to become saved. This is truly a beautiful message. In the words of Dr. William Hendriksen:

² Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 53.

How beautiful are those feet! As over the mountains those messengers approached with their electrifying news, how dust-covered and dirty these feet must have been! Yet also, how beautiful... for they were the feet of those who brought the long-awaited marvelous news!³

Consequently, the urgency of the Apostle's command to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-2 is accentuated even more so.

I 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: κήρυξον τὸν λόγον, preach the word.

The Content of Preaching

The Word of God

These passages above not only define 'what' preaching is, but also gives us some of the content of what was preached. In these instances it is obvious that the minister does not preach his own ideas and opinions but the pure plain Word of God. "Preach the word" was the command from Paul. Timothy was to be a herald of the gospel of God. This was his business as a minister of Christ. He was to proclaim the good news concerning the truth of Jesus. Likewise, it is the business of every minister of the Word of God to herald the truth about Messiah.

In a general sense, "the word" refers to the inerrant, inspired, authoritative Scripture of both the Old and New Testament revelation. Therefore, what is contained in these sixty-six books is what ought to be preached. There should not be a heralding of any book outside of Scripture: ancient, modern or purpose driven. Scripture and Scripture alone is the content.

Now, when looking a little closer at what is to be preached Martin Luther and the Reformers recognized an order entailed within this content. This was in regards to the distinction between law and gospel. People will never be grateful for the gospel of Jesus Christ unless they first realize they have broken the law of God. Luther, in his classic work *The Bondage of the Will* stated "'by the law is the knowledge of sin' [Rom 3:20], so the word of grace comes only to those who are distressed by a sense of sin and tempted to despair."⁴

This principle was foundational to all those who upheld the doctrines of grace. The great Cambridge preacher of the 16th century William Perkins stated that:

³ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans: New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 350-351.

⁴ Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* (J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, trans. Fleming H. Revell Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 1957), 168.

When the Word is preached, the law and the gospel operate differently. The law exposes the disease of sin, and as a side-effect stimulates and stirs it up. But it provides no remedy for it. However the gospel not only teaches us what is to be done, it also has the power of the Holy Spirit joined to it...the law is, therefore, first in the order of teaching; then comes the gospel.⁵

This lines up directly with how Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones described the way that the Puritans preached the gospel. He wrote:

In their preaching of the Gospel, they generally started with a presentation of the Law. They knew that man would not understand salvation unless he understood the nature of sin. So they expounded the Law of God, showing its relevance, and by means of it, they brought men and women to an understanding of what sin really means in the sight of God.⁶

The Cross of Christ

In a particular sense, the gospel is God's redemptive activity in Christ Jesus. As the Apostle Paul expressed it to the Corinthians, "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:1-2)

The focal point of the preaching of the Apostle Paul was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The preaching of the cross was the dominant theme of the early church and should be the dominant theme of the church today. This is what John Piper refers to as the ground of preaching. Piper, in discussing the righteousness of God and the pride of man as obstacles to preaching states:

In the cross of Christ, God has undertaken to overcome both obstacles to preaching. It overcomes the objective, external obstacle of God's righteous opposition to human pride. And it overcomes the subjective, internal obstacle of our proud opposition to God's glory. In so doing the cross becomes the ground of the objective validity of preaching and the ground of the subjective humility of preaching.⁷

The sinfulness and pride of man has brought contempt upon the very glory of God. This is where the law speaks of our condemnation. Yet, God in His grace, by the cross of Christ shows His righteousness by justifying those who have faith in Christ Jesus. "The

⁵ William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying* (Banner of Truth Carlisle, Pa: Banner of Truth Trust, Puritan Paperbacks 2002), 54.

⁶ Tony Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing: The Preaching of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones* (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 1994), 253.

⁷ John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 33.

miracle of the gospel is that God reconciles us to Himself through Jesus Christ by making our sin Christ's and by making His righteousness ours."⁸ By the death of His Son, the Father gives hope to lost sinners. This comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Rom. 10:17)

The Cross of Christ Brings Humility

For this reason the preacher must recognize that it is the Word of Christ (i.e. the Gospel) that has power in it and not the preacher. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:31 "'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" The Apostle's "main point is that the 'word of the cross' (1:18) is the power of God to break the pride of man – both preacher and listener – and bring us to a glad reliance on the mercy of God and not on ourselves."⁹

Practically speaking when one recognizes that God uses those whom He chooses, by the means that He chooses then one can only boast in the Lord for His glorious work. All boasting resides in the Sovereign God who makes His call effective to salvation for those He has chosen (Acts 13:48; 1 Cor. 1:23-24).

In writing to the believers who lived in Rome, the center of that great world empire, Paul stated, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). Here the preacher must humble himself before Almighty God and acknowledge that it is the gospel that is the message which is the power of God unto salvation. John Murray wrote, "The gospel is the omnipotence of God operative unto salvation."¹⁰

God has decided that He would make His call effective for His people after the proclamation of the gospel. The preacher must merely be faithful to God and preach what God has called him to preach, that is the Gospel. He must also never forget that he is merely a sower of the seed and not the source. (Matt. 13:3, 19)

The great Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones stated that the preacher "is a herald bringing a communication from the throne of God which demands a hearing and a response."¹¹ Therefore, we see that if the cross, which is the center of the Gospel, is not preached than the Word of God is not being preached. Thus, biblical preaching has been nullified and man cannot worship God for he cannot be reconciled to God.

The Cross of Christ Brings Accountability

Our brief survey of the New Testament discloses that preaching is the heralding of the good news of God concerning the truth of Jesus the Messiah. True biblical preaching

⁸ Eric Alexander, *Feed My Sheep. A Passionate Plea for Preaching* (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2002), 237.

⁹ Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 37.

¹⁰ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: New International Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), 27.

¹¹ Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing*, 84.

contains the Gospel of Jesus Christ which “is simply the most transformative, the most powerful, and the most explosive message there is.”¹² For as Perkins put it, “Preaching the Word is prophesying in the name and behalf of Christ. Through preaching those who hear are called into the state of grace, and preserved in it.”¹³ What an amazing message!

We have seen that the foundation of biblical preaching is none other than the Scripture alone. *Sola Scriptura* is the bedrock of all biblical preaching. As a matter of fact, by its very definition biblical preaching must necessarily be biblical. Lloyd-Jones stated that preachers “are called to preach the Word and to present the Word, and to bring the Word directly to people.”¹⁴ Any preaching that deviates from or does not rest itself in Scripture is therefore not biblical. This includes much of what we see in the popular preaching of today. For whatever reason it may be – whether to please people, make money, or just from a plain lack of biblical education – many so-called ‘preachers’ have not even come close to being a biblical preacher. As a matter of fact, more harm has been done by these people in the name of ‘preaching the Gospel.’

The half brother of our Lord Jesus warned the people of his day regarding how serious it is to accountability for which God will hold every person up to. He said, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.” (James 3:1)

This is an ominous statement which is equally applicable to ‘preachers’ of our modern era. Since teachers and pastors have authority and influence one must not seek to fill that role unless they are fully qualified. Jesus said, “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak” (Matt. 12:36). Therefore, every person who gets on stage and preaches or attempts to teach the people of God is definitely going to be held to a very strict standard and that by God. This is a fearful responsibility.

What Preaching is Not

In this section I will give three brief examples of what usually passes as preaching, yet with even a cursory look one can tell that it is far from biblical preaching. The following transcript was taken from a *Trinity Broadcasting Network* television show in which the Suzanne Hinn, the wife of the popular faith teacher Benny Hinn is preaching at her former church in Orlando, Florida. The whole time this is being said she is frantically pacing back and forth (probably getting herself dizzy). Suffice it to say, a cursory glance at the transcript is enough to see the vast difference between biblical preaching and this.

My engine is revving to go. It’s revving up. How about yours? And if its not, and you know what? If your engine is not revving up, you know what? You need, you need a Holy Ghost enema right up your rear end (applause)... because God won’t

¹² Mohler, *Feed My Sheep*, 22.

¹³ William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying* (Banner of Truth Carlisle, Pa: Banner of Truth Trust, Puritan Paperbacks 2002), 7.

¹⁴ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 67.

tolerate, he will not tolerate anything else. You say, "I've never seen this side of you." Let me tell you something. Whoa, when you allow the Spirit of God then you don't worry about man's attention because you know what, it is what God cares, it's what he thinks. Be God pleasers, don't be people pleasers! Because if you're a people pleaser you're a butt kisser. If you're a people pleaser you're a butt kisser and there is no other word for it (unintelligible). Hey you know what? I think that English (unintelligible), hey I am English too; I think that English sense of humor because we tend to see things, a little bit com- more comical than most people. But you know, like I said, you know we don't have no more time. I said to Wendy, we have no more time. Women, let me tell you something, you have no more time to even worry about your (taking off shoes) stinking high heels because you know what, we can't keep up with what God's doing. He is moving quickly. You better take them off! Take them off, and get them off and get your combat boots on because he's revving. It's revving up. It's revving up. Run with the clouds. Run with the clouds! Run with the clouds! Run with the clouds! Ruuuuuuuun! Ruuuuuuuun! Ruuuuuuuun! Ruuuuuuuun! Ruuuuuuuun!¹⁵ (She falls down as if she was in a drunken stupor.)

Another non-example of a biblical preacher is one particular televangelist named Pastor Kerney Thomas. This man is a typical word of faith teacher who sends out anointed prayer cloths. Moreover, he talks about destroying generational curses off of people's money? This is so money can "flow into one's life like a river." One more bit of information on him is that every time this 'preacher' says the word "God" he screeches the word at a high pitch sounding similar to a crow.

These are obviously not examples of biblical preaching. It is true that the clip of Hinn's wife is only a two minute clip of possibly a forty minute sermon. However, not only is the content empty of meaning, but any true believer sensitive to lost sinners would shudder to know that there are tons of unbelievers watching this nonsense and are mocking the very gospel that changes hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Moreover, this is what typically comes on 'Christian television' and has been resonating in the minds of the average person when they hear the word 'preacher.'

A third example has to do with Joel Osteen, the 'preacher' of perhaps the largest church in America. This church has about 30,000 members. Yet, Osteen has admitted he does not like to speak about sin. He avoids the topic on purpose. He has stated that he has never used the word 'sinners.'¹⁶ 30,000 people weekly are not confronted with the biblical teaching about sin. How many true believers can there be in a church that does not talk about sin? Yet, we are to expect churches like that for as the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:3, "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions."

¹⁵ "Benny Hinn's wife, and this isn't fake like her Husband"
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDJU_NZFtZc 2, Feb. 2008.

¹⁶ See the article by Michael S. Horton: *Joel Osteen: Whatever Happened to Sin?*
<http://www.whitehorseinn.org/osteenart02.htm>

The Subject of Sin

The Lord Jesus talked a lot about sin. This was part of the Gospel call. He called sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17). He told people to stop sinning (John 8:11). He told the self-righteous Jews, that they would die in their sin if they did not repent (John 8:21). The Apostles taught the same things. In reading the book of Acts and studying the sermons recorded by Luke we see that these men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, did not tickle people's ears, but boldly proclaimed "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), which includes the sinful condition of man.

The Gospel of Christ cannot be preached without the issue of sin being dealt with. It is absolutely impossible to discuss the salvation of sinners when they do not know that it is sin that they are being saved from. We must address the issue of sin, because the Bible does. Preaching alone can declare this truth to people. Sin, is the greatest enemy of mankind. The Bible does not sweep the topic of sin under the rug like many popular TV preachers do today.

For clarification purposes, the mere fact that these and others are atrocious examples of preaching in no way means they are unsaved. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It has nothing to do with terrible, unbiblical preaching. However, if the content is in contradiction to the cross of Christ (i.e. the gospel preached by Christ and the Apostles) then one can question a 'preachers' salvation.¹⁷ My point here is to declare that hollering, simply to holler, or pacing and raising your voice do not make biblical preaching.

The Task / Preparation of Preaching

The significance of biblical preaching cannot be underestimated for this is the means by which God has chosen to save His elect. The Apostle Paul, when writing to the Corinthians describes this means.

ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἔγνω ὁ κόσμος διὰ τῆς σοφίας τὸν θεόν, εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος σῶσαι τοὺς πιστεύοντας·

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. (1 Cor. 1:21)

The Apostle contrasts the phrases ὁ κόσμος διὰ τῆς σοφίας "the world through its wisdom" and διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος "through the foolishness of the message that was preached." The word δια "through" indicates what a person places their trust in. The world places their trust in its own wisdom, while believers place their

¹⁷ In these cases there has been considerable discussion regarding questionable doctrines which would place these individuals outside of Orthodoxy.

trust in τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος “the folly of what we preach.” Why would the believer place their trust in the preaching of the gospel? It is simply because the believer has been illuminated by the Holy Spirit and recognizes that by the preaching of the Gospel, though foolish to the unbeliever, salvation comes to those who believe.

In discussing the great preaching ministry of Jonathan Edwards, John Piper pointed out the intensity, the overwhelming conviction, and the seriousness that pervaded Edwards preaching. He spoke of this as the “gravity of preaching” and stated, “gravity in preaching is appropriate because preaching is God’s appointed means for the conversion of sinners, the awakening of the church, and the preservation of the saints.”¹⁸

Training in the Text to be Preached

One would think that preparation and personal study would never be an area that could be neglected in a minister’s life. However, this is simply not the case with many today. Proper preparation is extremely vital for one who is going to preach the Word of God. There ought to be hunger and desire to study God’s Word and internalize it. In Psalm 42:2 the Psalmist cried out to God “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” This yearning to know God is also expressed by the man in Psalm 1:2, “but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

A preacher must spend time with God in His Word, being trained in the text that he may convey the truth of God to those listening and to move them to respond. John Calvin commented on preaching without preparation. He said:

If I should step up into the pulpit, without vouchsafing to look upon any book, and fondly imagine to say thus in myself, ‘Truth. When I come thither, God will give me enough whereof to speak,’ and in the mean while I hold scorn to read, or to study aforehand what I shall speak, and come hither without minding how to apply the Holy Scripture to the edification of the people, by reason whereof I should play the presumptuous fool, and God would put me to shame for mine overboldness.¹⁹

How convicting this ought to be for us preachers who have ‘winged it’ many times. The studying and meditation of Scripture is one of our primary duties. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones warned against skimping on preparation. He taught that “the Spirit will inform the mind as the preacher studies the Bible.”²⁰ The Apostle Paul instructed Timothy writing:

σπούδασον σεαυτὸν δόκιμον παραστήσαι τῷ θεῷ, ἐργάτην ἀνεπαίσχυντον, ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας.

¹⁸ Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 58.

¹⁹ John Calvin, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* (Fascimile edition of 1583. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 292.

²⁰ Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing*, 95.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

The Greek verb σπουδάσῃ “Do your best” is a second person singular aorist active imperative. Paul is commanding Timothy to be eager and make every effort to present himself approved before God. Matthew Henry correctly pointed out:

Ministers must be workmen; they have work to do, and they must take pains in it. Workmen that are unskilful, or unfaithful, or lazy, have need to be ashamed; but those who mind their business, and keep to their work, are workmen that need not be ashamed. And what is their work? It is *rightly to divide the word of truth*. Not to invent a new gospel, but rightly to divide the gospel that is committed to their trust.²¹

Proper preparation is not just the studying and reading of the Word of God but also incorporates the discipline of prayer. We see this lived out in the life of our Savior. The Lord Jesus bathed His life with prayer. He began His earthly ministry with prayer at His baptism (Luke 3:21). Luke records that Jesus “would withdraw to desolate places and pray” (Luke 5:16; c.f. Luke 9:18; Mark 1:35). Before selecting his twelve apostles, Jesus spent the entire night praying to the Father (Luke 6:12). No doubt, the Lord’s prayers were powerful and moving. After one such time of prayer, “one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray...” (Luke 11:1)

Without even touching the surface we must concede that prayer is part and parcel of preaching. James Rosscup stated, “Prayer, with its companion spiritual virtues, is indispensable to biblical preaching. It saturates the preacher and godly preaching, indicates the preacher’s dependence on God, and is authentically biblical.”²² The preacher must be one steeped in prayer – for himself, for his congregation – that he might declare the message of God with power to change the hearts of men. To neglect one’s prayer life, as a preacher, is to neglect one’s ministry. E.M. Bounds was correct when he said, “Light praying will make light preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong [the God who answers prayer does this] ... and makes it stick.”²³

John Bunyan, who is known for his classic work *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, also wrote a small book called *Praying in the Spirit*. He describes prayer as “a pouring out of the heart or soul. There is in prayer an unbosoming of a man’s self, an opening of the heart to God, an affectionate pouring out of the soul in requests, sighs, and groans.”²⁴ So a preacher must be trained and taught by God in His Word for the purpose of heralding the good news regarding the crucified and risen Savior. Yet, if the preacher does not make it a discipline to pour out one’s heart before the very God whom they seek to be taught by, there seems to be an inconsistency within him.

²¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Logos Library System. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc. 1997).

²² John MacArthur, *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 49.

²³ *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁴ John Bunyan, *Prayer* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 17.

Trusting in the Holy Spirit

The biblical preacher must rely upon the Holy Spirit of God. He must have a desire to be enlivened, illuminated, and filled with the Holy Spirit for the act of heralding God's Word to His people. For such a glorious task as this, the man of God should never enter a pulpit to utter a single word concerning his God without reflecting and seeking the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians made the distinction between merely speaking forth the Word of God and proclaiming it with power in the Holy Spirit. He wrote, "Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." (1 Thess. 1:5)

There was power in Paul's proclamation of the Gospel because he was a man of prayer, and a man of study. However, he did not rely upon his intellect in preaching but he relied upon the Holy Spirit of God. If the Spirit of God does not accompany the Word of God, it will be nothing but vain words. Again we consult Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who stated that he "felt burdened to encourage people to seek for the full blessing of the Holy Spirit."²⁵ This is indispensable for the preacher, for no matter how articulate or godly he is, without the Spirit's help he has no power.

In regards to completing the earthly work of building the temple, the Lord God of Israel gave His Word to Zerubbabel, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts." (Zech. 4:6) The Israelites were utterly powerless without the help of the omnipotent Spirit.

Likewise, the preacher must trust and rely upon the Holy Spirit. He must seek Him and call upon Him to take over as he heralds the Word of God to those in his congregation. Lloyd-Jones believed that this Holy Spirit power which gave boldness, unction, and authority was available for all preachers who would diligently seek to be inundated by the Spirit. "He wanted preachers to be powerful with ministries set ablaze by the Spirit's anointing."²⁶ He said that biblical preaching "is theology coming through a man who is on fire."²⁷ John Piper exhorted those in ministry saying, "Unless we learn how to rely on the Word of the Spirit and the power of the Spirit in all lowliness and meekness, it is not God who will get the glory in our preaching."²⁸

Expository preaching

Expository preaching is sometimes referred to as exegetical preaching because it makes known, or explains the Scripture. To interpret the Scripture correctly one must start with a proper hermeneutic. Hermeneutics is the art and science of biblical interpretation. Dr. Robert Morey stated:

²⁵ Sargent, *The Sacred Anointing*, 96.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁷ Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers*, 97.

²⁸ Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, 43.

Hermeneutics is the discovery, understanding, and use of those linguistic and literary principles which should be followed when seeking to understand what an author is saying to his readers.²⁹

What did the biblical writers intend their original readers to understand? What were they trying to communicate? This is precisely the goal of interpreting the Scripture. When a preacher makes this known or exegetes this he is engaged in applied hermeneutics. Since exegesis is applied hermeneutics, exegetical or expository preaching is bringing the meaning of the text, (which the biblical authors intended) to the people of God entirely and exactly as it was intended by God. Dr. Stephen and Dr. David Olford give an exceptional definition of expository preaching.

Expository preaching is the Spirit-empowered explanation and proclamation of the text of God's Word with due regard to the historical, contextual, grammatical, and doctrinal significance of the given passage, with the specific object of invoking a Christ-transforming response.³⁰

Haddon Robinson, Professor of Preaching at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, confirmed this saying:

At its best, expository preaching is the presentation of biblical truth, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, Spirit-guided study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit applies first to the life of the preacher and then through him to his congregation.³¹

Expository preaching is not the only type of preaching that is taking place in our day and age. John MacArthur, in commenting on differing types of preaching and making a case for expository preaching states:

Discussions about preaching divide in to three types: topical, textual and expository. Topical messages usually combine a series of Bible verses that loosely connect with a theme. Textual preaching uses a short text or passage that generally serves as a gateway into whatever subject the preacher chooses to address. Neither the topical nor the textual method represents a serious effort to interpret, understand, explain, or apply God's truth in the context of the Scripture(s) used.³²

One distinctive issue that the church faces today as in no other time is the fact that our generation is a generation whose attention span is virtually nothing. People just cannot sit

²⁹ Robert Morey, *The Doctrine of the Trinity Syllabus: TH 702* (Irvine: California Biblical University, 2007), 31.

³⁰ Stephen F. Olford and David L. Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching* (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 69.

³¹ John MacArthur, *Preaching: How to Preach Biblically*, 9.

³² *Ibid.*, 7.

still for more than ten to fifteen minutes, nor can they remain attentive during a lecture. The ‘church’ has in many ways given themselves over to seeker sensitive means of reaching this ADHD generation. This has manifested itself in church services that mirror plays, poetry readings, or concerts.

It has shifted the focus of the worship service off of the preaching of the very Word of God and onto music or story telling. Many churches have minimized the amount of time the pastor is to expound upon the Scripture. This no doubt has led to a decline in genuine conversions and effectiveness in ministry. People have lost touch with the biblical truth that the preaching and exposition of the Word is worshipping over the Word of God.

Again, as we revisit Paul’s imperative to Timothy, κήρυξον τὸν λόγον “preach the word” we see that this is a biblically authoritative command given to expound the Word of God. “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). Thus it is the correctly preached Word of God – by a man of conviction, a man who has spent time in study and prayer – that brings forth faith from the sovereign moving of the Holy Spirit.

John R. W. Stott stated that “churches grow to maturity when the Word of God is faithfully and sensitively expounded to them.”³³ There is a decline in church membership in Evangelical churches today. Many of the older denominations are being lost to liberalism. Why is this the case? Perhaps, it is because the Word of Christ is not being expounded, or heralded according to the command of Scripture. Dr. Derek Thomas, in his chapter on “Expository Preaching,” in the book *Feed My Sheep*, concludes with the following:

In the end, that is what we desperately need today: preaching that unpacks the Bible’s message and conveys a sense of the reality of God’s presence. In the end, only faithful expository preaching can do that.³⁴

Conclusion

The church in twenty-first century America needs to go back to its biblical roots and preach the Gospel according to the Word of God, regardless if it is politically incorrect. The pulpit must only be used by biblical preachers. Those called to the ministry of preaching must herald the Gospel of God, declaring the veracity about the crucified and risen Savior, knowing that they are accountable to Almighty God.

The truth about sin and that fact that man is by nature a law breaker will not be absent from the preacher who seeks to glorify God. In humility he will bow before the cross of Christ and trust in the Holy Spirit for the power to properly proclaim this most treasured truth. The biblical preacher will by no means neglect the diligent studying, praying, and relying upon the Holy Spirit for understanding and power as he prepares to speak forth

³³ Olford, *Anointed Expository Preaching*, 68.

³⁴ Derrick Thomas, *Feed My Sheep*, 93.

the very Word of God to God's people. Finally, the biblical preacher will proclaim the whole counsel of God as he explains the text, presenting and proclaiming the Word of God expositively.

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“Benny Hinn's wife, and this isn't fake like her Husband”
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