



WHAT KIND OF PREACHING DO WE NEED?

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Preaching has been a part of God's plan since nearly the dawn of time. The scriptures call Noah "*a preacher of righteousness*" who warned of the coming flood while he prepared the ark. God sent a long procession of prophets forth during the times of the Old Testament to preach to His both faithful and wayward people. I don't know that there was ever a greater preacher, besides the Lord Jesus, than John the Baptist who stirred the hearts of multitudes of people and pointed them to the imminent revelation of the Messiah and His kingdom. And, of course, Jesus Christ can never be paralleled as a preacher sent from heaven. His sermons and sayings captivated multitudes, stumped the scholars of His time, melted stony hearts, and left people gazing in wonder and saying, "*never a man spake like this man.*" And when Christ sent His apostles forth to herald the gospel of salvation and when He built His church, He commissioned that the good news be spread through preaching. Most preaching is out of vogue today but there is just as great a need for preaching today as there ever has been. When Paul wrote his second letter to his protégé' and son in the faith, Timothy, in 2 Timothy 4:1-2, he said: "*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*"

God has an important job for the preacher. It is a job that comes with stringent requirements and with strict judgment. And as I said, the world and the church needs preaching today as much as they ever have. But WHAT KIND OF PREACHING DO WE NEED? That will be the question we pose for our sermon today.

It may seem as though we are experiencing these days a dearth of preaching. That's not really the case. There are all kinds of preaching going on and its relatively easy to find. Besides the church buildings we see on nearly every corner, there are entire television and radio networks devoted to nearly 24 hours a day of preaching. The internet, including YouTube and other social media sites, as well as countless websites, all contain hours and hours and hours of preaching. There is so much preaching available that you can listen to as much of it as you desire any time you like and no matter where you live. In fact, I

would venture to say that there is much more preaching going on in the world today than there ever has been. But preaching comes in many forms, styles, and approaches, not to mention the many things that are being preached. So, you can not only readily find preaching, but you can also find about any KIND you want to hear. And there are about as many opinions about what kind of preaching is best and what kind of preaching is most needed in our modern world. Not all preaching is good preaching. Not all preaching is worth your time and attention. In fact, a great deal of the preaching going on today is doing more harm than it is good.

So, just what kind of preaching do we need today? What kind of preaching pleases and honors God? Paul told the Corinthian church that *“it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.”* Now, Paul is not suggesting that preaching is a foolish thing to do. He is rather referring to the world’s attitude toward preaching. He is saying that in the eyes of the self-righteous Jew and the sophisticated Greek, preaching Christ and Him crucified was a foolish thing to them. But Paul says that such preaching is God’s means to save mankind. That makes preaching an essential thing. And it’s just as important today as it was then. To some, preaching is out of vogue, and we have replaced it with lecturing; or counseling; or with entertaining; but we need preaching and God demands that His will be preached. But what kind of preaching pleases God and accomplishes the purposes for which He commissioned it?

I would like to point out at least five things that the word of God sets forth that describe the kind of preaching that God desires to be done and thus, the kind of preaching we need today as opposed to much of what we hear. First, we need APOSTOLIC preaching. The apostles of Christ not only possess the authority Christ gave them to legislate all matters in the church, but they were also the ones immediately commissioned by Christ to preach the gospel to the world and to instruct the church in righteousness. And so, the apostles are our examples in preaching and the truth they passed down to us through their word is the thing we are commanded to preach. Paul told the younger preacher Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, *“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”* It was not up to Timothy to preach whatever he wanted to preach. Paul charged him with preaching the things that he (Paul, the apostle) had given to him. He then told him in chapter 4:2 to *“Preach the word...”* That’s all the faithful gospel preacher can preach is the word. He’s not there to preach or promote himself or his own work or ministry. He’s not there to share his opinion. He’s not there to be an entertainer. He’s not there to do whatever he needs to do or preach to draw a crowd or attract a following. He’s not there to give people what they want. He’s not there to get involved in the kingdoms of men and the political system and dabble in the affairs of the civil state. He’s not there to right the wrongs of society through social initiatives and programs. He’s not the CEO of a business enterprise. He’s not there to merely visit the hospitals, perform your weddings, and conduct your funerals. He’s not there to review the book of the month, he’s there to preach the book of the ages! Friend, let me tell you, if you listen to a preacher who spends more of his time quoting various authors, citing statistics, reading poetry, and telling stories than he does quoting scripture, you’ve got the wrong preacher. That’s not the kind of preaching the world nor the church needs.

The gospel is the power of God to save those who believe it (Romans 1:16). The word of God can save those who hear it (James 1:21). The word is the weapon and the instrument through which the Spirit of God converts the sinner and sanctifies the believer (Ephesians 6:17). If all of that is true, shouldn’t a preacher be in the business of preaching the word and only the word? Shouldn’t that be what he is there to do and what you can count on him to ALWAYS do? That’s the kind of preaching Jesus and His apostles did, and we are charged today just as much as Timothy and others were 2,000 years ago to

preach those things the apostles gave us to preach. *“Preach the word. Be instant in season and out of season.”* Preaching should point people to Christ. It should instruct people in how to live the Christian life and please God. It should lead to faith and obedience on the part of the hearers. It should strengthen and develop Christians and result in them becoming more like Christ. And it should impart the hope and comfort that comes, not from the preacher’s affirmation, but from the blessed promises of the word of God to the faithful.

But our preaching should not only be APOSTOLIC; it should thus be ABSOLUTE and AUTHORITATIVE. Preachers need to preach with conviction. Of course, we must be studious and ever so careful to be sure that what we are preaching comes from God’s word and is therefore true, but the preacher should never approach the word of God with a mealy-mouthed, take-it or leave-it, live-and-let-live attitude. If the bible teaches something, preachers should preach it with fervor and with authority. One of the reasons the world and sometimes the church doesn’t take the word of God as seriously as they should is because their preachers don’t leave anyone with the impression that it’s really that big of a deal.

Jesus spoke with authority. When people heard Him preach, they walked away “astonished at His doctrine”, the bible says in Mark 1:22, *“for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.”* The teachers of the law would stand in the synagogues, and they would cite the opinions and the teachings of the various rabbis, and they would cloud the law with their own interpretations and traditions, but Jesus was different. He said *“you have heard...’ but I SAY UNTO YOU.”* And if we’re preaching what Jesus and His apostles preached, we should do it with the same confidence and authority that they did. People need to know that the word of God means what it says. They need to know that the word of God has authority over them today. They need to know that its testimonies are true and that one day we will be eternally judged by what it says. Arrogant? No! Ignorantly dogmatic? No! But confident in a thus sayeth the Lord? Absolutely! May the Lord send men into the fields today who have the burning word of God in their hearts and preach it like people’s lives depend upon it. Because they do.

And not only do we need preaching that is APOSTOLIC; and preaching that is ABSOLUTE; but we need preaching that is AUTHENTIC. The field of preaching has been disgraced by far too many who have preached for gain or for popularity and who have shamed the name of Christ and His cause by wicked and hypocritical living. Men who have built their religious empires by fleecing the poor and the vulnerable so they can fly on private jets and live in the lap of luxury and in some cases were living morally wicked lives in the process have discredited the gospel they claim to preach. I want you to listen to what God said through the Psalmist in Psalm 50:16-17. This is a stinging indictment of the hypocrite if there ever was one! He says: *“But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, Or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, And castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, And hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, And thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; Thou slanderest thine own mother’s son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”* That’s what God thinks of the man who preaches for gain or for whatever purpose and doesn’t try to live by the word he preaches.

Now, that doesn’t mean the preacher must be a perfect man – for that would disqualify all. It doesn’t mean that one who has lived a sinful life in the past but has left that life behind may never again preach – for that would have barred Peter, Paul, and everyone else for that matter from the pulpit. He MUST,

however, be a man who is now seeking and striving to please God. He must be a man who repents when he is wrong and strives to practice all that he preaches and all that the word of God commands.

And then we need preaching that is AFFECTIONATE. That is to say, we need preachers who are motivated by love for the souls of sinners. I'm afraid in our zeal to preach what is right and to defend the truth against evil, some of us have gotten the wrong idea about preaching. The preacher's mission is not merely to scold and to punish. That doesn't mean that he never rebukes people in sin because if he failed to do that, he would be ignoring the command of God. (2 Timothy 4:2) But when he must rebuke, he does so because first, he loves the sinner, and second because it's necessary to pull the person away from their sin. I have heard preachers that I honestly believe they enjoy condemning people. They derive some egotistical or sadistic satisfaction from denouncing and pronouncing judgment upon others. I have encountered church members who it seems they almost enjoy seeing others tied to the homiletic whipping post and being "worked over" by the preacher. That's not what preaching is for. The object of preaching is not for the preacher to be able to walk away beating his chest and say "well, I sure told them." Preaching is to save the sinner and a preacher must preach motivated by and always controlled by his genuine love and concern FOR the sinner. And if he's not preaching because of his love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for those Jesus died to save, then he needs to find another profession.

Now, there's another side to that too: a preacher who is unwilling to condemn sin and rebuke those who sin doesn't really love the sinner and he doesn't really love the will of God. Isaiah 58:1 says, "*Cry aloud, spare not, Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, And shew my people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins.*" When Paul wrote to Titus about those who teach false doctrine, he said: "*...Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;*" There IS a time for rebuke and censure. The preacher does have a responsibility to point out sin and error and to condemn it by the word of God. But it is love for Christ and love for the sinner that should compel him to do so. And when that truly is his motive, it will be easily seen, and his rebuke will be more likely to be received and repentance brought about. (Story of man who got a letter from his son).

And finally, we need preaching that is not only apostolic, absolute, authentic, and affectionate, but we also need preaching today that is APOCALYPTIC. Apocalyptic writing in the ancient world was prophetic writing that generally foretold of some judgment of evil and gave the signal that victory was ahead for the righteousness. The book of Revelation, for example, is an example of an apocalyptic book. Now, today, preachers have no new revelation nor anything new of which to prophesy. But our preaching should point people toward eternity. There is a judgment to face, a heaven to gain, and a hell to shun and our preaching should be reminding our busy, distracted, and indifferent world of those facts. Someone counted and said that approximately one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament deal with some type of coming judgment, such as the Destruction of Jerusalem which the early disciples were repeatedly warned of; or the second coming of Christ; or the final judgment. But have you noticed the lack of urgency in much of the preaching we hear today? Much of what comes from modern pulpits emphasizes how to have your best life here and now. While we should certainly relish the joy that comes from living for Christ in this world, we must never forget that this world is not our home. It is temporary. Our lives are short. Death and the judgment are drawing nearer every day. We are 20-minutes closer to the return of Christ than when we began this sermon. Jesus said in Mark 13:33 "*Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.*" And Paul said in Romans 13:11-12, "*And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light.*" Preachers need to be taking the word of God and lighting the fires of revival. The church needs to be waking up but much of the preaching we're hearing

is putting us to sleep. The world needs Jesus, and they need to know that time is running out and that a dark and terrible eternity is looming without Him. Does your preacher ever preach about the Judgment Day? Does he still preach about hell, and does he warn people about it? Jude said in verses 22-23: *“And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.”* Yes, we need preaching that is apocalyptic and that draws people’s eyes to the eastern sky and that challenges and urges them to prepare for the judgment and for eternity. Such may seem out of style, but that’s the kind of preaching that we need today.

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