



Faith Pulpit

We Believe in Preaching

There are those who would do away with preaching if they could. It's not just the unregenerate crowd being referred to, but this is the secret sentiment of many believers as well. Some of them may not be walking closely with the Lords, but others who are will recognize the validity to the complaint, "I'm not being fed!" This is the day of the T.V. generation in which we are continually being confronted with expert communication. Yet, when we go to church, we may only tolerate the sermon and feel that we are being bored to death with religious jargon. It's not a rejection of God or His Word, but a failure to find any benefit from what may be rambling and fuzzy speech about the Bible. Is the day of effective preaching a thing of the past? Our answer is a bold "No!"

Its Definition

What is good, effective preaching anyway? First, it is exposition. Paul commanded Timothy, "Preach the Word" (2 Timothy 4:2). Preaching which will have lasting effectiveness will be Bible exposition. This is not just preaching about the Bible, nor is it only preaching which is doctrinally correct and true to the Bible. Also, it is not a matter of stringing together as many Bible verses as we can find or quote. Bible exposition is taking a passage of Scripture, drawing our proposition and main points from the text, and declaring what the passage is saying.

Second, it is also exhortation. Preaching is not simply a lecture or the dispensing of information. It certainly involves teaching, but is more than that. It is heralding, stating boldly, and declaring forth the Scriptures with an earnestness and passion. That is why some people call this powerful preaching or dynamic preaching. It includes warning, encouraging, and pleading. As Paul commanded: reprove, rebuke, exhort (2 Timothy 4:2).

It is not how loudly we speak; it is our manner of proclamation. The effective preacher is one who impresses us in his speaking as one who delivers a message which has life-and-death consequences. It is preaching for decisions to be made.

Its Importance

Why is expository and persuasive preaching important? First, it gives the preacher credibility for the other avenues of his ministry. It is that area of ministry where the preacher has his most regular and systematic contact with his people, and it may be the initial or only contact the preacher has with certain members of the congregation. This contact may be the basis on which people in the congregation decide whether or not to ask the pastor for further help.

Second, it is the means whereby the congregation regularly meets face to face with God. Going to church will not be merely a habit or duty. It will be an opportunity to hear the message of God for us declared with power. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5). One avenue of pastoral authority comes through the faithful exposition of God's Word. Hebrews 13:7 tells us to remember those who have spoken to us the Word of God, and Paul reminded the Ephesian pastors that in his training of them he had not hesitated to declare all of the counsel of God (Acts 20:27). The pastors worthy of double honor were those who had excelled in this fundamental aspect of ministry—laboring in the Word and doctrine (1 Timothy 5:17). This is why we have no altar in our churches—the sacrifice has been made at Calvary; but the focal point in the place where the congregation assembles is a pulpit. It is here we listen to the very words of God!

Third, it is the God-appointed method whereby He works to change lives. That is why in closing his earthly days Paul wrote so emphatically to Timothy to preach the Word. And this was Paul's emphasis when writing to the Corinthians. The preaching of the cross is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18), and it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save people (1 Corinthians 1:21). When we preach, we ought to be praying for our people and for their needs, that God would work through our preaching to meet these needs, and we ought to expect that God will do it. It is told that a young preacher once asked the great pulpiteer Charles Spurgeon, why God seemed to bless with decisions every time he preached. Mr. Spurgeon responded by asking, "When you preach, you don't expect God to give decisions every time you preach, do you?" "No," was the response; "And that," said Mr. Spurgeon, "is why you do not have decisions every time you preach!" We need to stop merely dispensing information and earnestly plead with people to respond. And we need to be asking for the power of God to be at work as we speak.

Its Craft

We also want to say a few things to preachers about the developing of the sermon. First, make it interesting. Your task is to take people from where they are into the message God has for them. Use technique, colorful language, and illustrations with which your hearers will identify. There is nothing wrong with a sermon just because it grabs your attention.

Second, keep it simple. Strive for clarity; use precise language. Your people ought to be able to understand and follow you throughout the message.

Third, have a clear idea of your sermon's goal. What kind of decision are you asking people to make? Then point toward that goal. It should not be fuzzy and general, such as "That my people might grow and love the Word." That is the purpose of all preaching. What is your specific goal for this sermon? How can you ask people to respond when you are sending them mixed signals?

Fourth, make it relevant. Make it practical and pertinent to the needs of your people. Let them know clearly how the truths you have been expounding may be applied to their individual lives.

Last, continually improve. Keep learning, be alert to illustrations you may use, and be aware of your people and their needs. And ask God to help fundamental preachers everywhere to deliver God-honoring sermons.

Preaching is the power of God!

Dr. George Houghton

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