



“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God,” I Corinthians 1:18.

Preaching Is Important

Lesson Aim: To increase the influence of preaching in the lives of believers.

L131. Date: March 1975. **Text:** I Corinthians 1:17-24; 2:1-5.

Topic: Preaching.

“Are you going to stay for preaching?” That question is far too common among people who attend Sunday School. Let your answer be an emphatic “Yes!” Preaching is the heart and climax of all church activities.

Preaching was the first and foremost method of missionary evangelism practiced by the first Christians. Before there were church buildings, there was preaching. Before there was a Sunday School, there was preaching. Before there was a Training Service, there was preaching. Before there were deacons, there were preachers. The last and greatest commission the Lord Jesus gave His churches was a commission to preach: **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,”** Mark 16:15.

Preaching is important! That is, it is important to spiritually minded people. The only people who belittle preaching are lost sinners and carnal believers. I Corinthians 1:17-24 and 2:1, 5 indicate that preaching was held in low esteem by many of the Corinthians, but it was because they were “carnal . . . babes in Christ” who needed to be fed with milk and not meat because they were spiritually immature.

How do you evaluate preaching? Is the preaching hour a blessing or a burden? Your answer to those questions indicate something concerning your spiritual life!

Today's lesson aims “to increase the influence of preaching in the lives of believers.” Pause in your reading to ask God to speak to you through the study which follows.

I. COMMISSION, 1:17

Preaching is important because it is authorized of God. **“Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel . . .”** 1:17.

Why does a man become a preacher? If he is a man of God, he becomes a preacher because God calls and commissions him. In a vital way, he becomes God's man—God's spokesman. He does not speak his own message, but God's message. He has heard God speak and can do nothing less than preach. **“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God . . . that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ . . .”** I Peter 4:11. Each true preacher of God can testify, **“ . . . The Lord took me . . . and the Lord said unto me, Go”** Amos 7:15.

The Apostle Paul lived under the sense of a divine call. Jesus revealed Himself to Paul on the Damascus road because, **“ . . . He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel”** Acts 9:15. Paul relied upon that clear-cut call to direct his ministry (Acts 13:46-48), to explain his message (Acts 22:1-21), to certify his ministry (Acts 13:2-4), and to refute his opponents (Galatians 1:15,16).

What did Paul mean in writing, **“Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel . . .”**? He did not minimize the ordinance of baptism. He rather magnified the gospel. “He was not a baptizer but a gospelizer”—Herschel H. Hobbs. Baptism should follow faith, but the preacher is not to stress ritual above reality. The true preacher will keep his primary emphasis upon the gospel, as God intended.

Apply the above truth to your church situation. What does it say about your pastor? He is a man, called of God and invited by your church to be God's messenger to you. His ministry in your church is to build you up in the faith so you can be a faithful worker for Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16). Respect your pastor; Listen prayerfully to his messages. Be available to God that He may minister through him to you. Your pastor is God's man to minister to you.

II. CONTENT, 1:17, 18, 23; 2:1, 2

Preaching is important because it is the proclamation of the truth concerning Jesus Christ. **“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,”** I Corinthians 2:2.

Preaching has been defined as the proclamation of divine truth, through a chosen personality, for the purpose of meeting human needs. Preaching is

proclamation. More important, preaching is the proclamation of truth. More important yet, preaching is the proclamation of divine truth. Any preaching which is not the proclamation of divine truth is not the kind of preaching commissioned by Christ.

Paul declared, **“Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel . . . For the preaching of the cross . . . is the power of God,”** 1:17, 18. Paul did not disparage baptism. He was baptized (Acts 9:18). He baptized some who became converts under his ministry (I Corinthians 1:14-16). He taught new converts that they should be baptized (Acts 16:14, 15; 19:5). Concerning his ministry in Corinth, it is written, **“. . . Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, 'and were baptized,'** Acts 18:8. Baptism, however, was not the main thrust of Paul's ministry. He remembered that he had baptized Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, but besides those he did not remember if he had baptized any other in Corinth? Why? Baptism was and is but a picture of the real heart of the Christian gospel. It is the symbolic testimony of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. It is a picture of the believer's experience in which he received new life in Christ through being born again. Paul's primary concern was with the reality, not the ritual.

The essence of Christian evangelism and growth is not rituals performed but truth proclaimed. One does not become a Christian through rituals, nor does he grow to spiritual maturity by rituals. Open your heart, therefore, to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. To some the preaching of Jesus Christ may be a stumbling block, and to others it may be foolishness. If you are saved, you know Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Do not disparage preaching of the once-crucified-and-now-risen Savior.

III. CONTRADICTION, 1:18-24

Preaching is important to God even when it seems unimportant to men. **“. . . It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,”** 1:21.

Preachers are not professional entertainers. Most of them cannot match the skill of showmanship exhibited by stars of motion pictures and television. The result is that, in the present generation, there is a tendency to disparage preaching. If you are tempted to do so, remember one truth—Preachers are proclaimers, not entertainers. Their concern is to please God, not men.

Preaching is unique. Rituals appeal to the eyes. Rhetoric appeals to the

ears. Reason appeals to the mind. Preaching appeals to the heart.

Carnal believers and unsaved people get concerned about the style of preaching more than about content of preaching. That is a tragic mistake. Such people want to be entertained. They observe tone of voice, style of syntax, gestures, and volume. If any of those disagree with their preferences, they find it difficult to listen to the preacher. Far more important than those (even though those things are important) is the truth preached. Be more concerned about what is said than about how it is said.

Be careful lest you become a spectator in church. To do so is to commit a tragic spiritual error. You can ignore the preacher. You can disrespect the pastor. You can, but you will answer to God for it. He is God's proclaimer, not your entertainer.

God has appointed preaching as a means to an end. He has selected certain men to do the work of preaching. The world may call the preaching of the cross mere foolishness, but God knows the world will never find Him through human brilliance. He has ordained preaching as the way to reach men. Do not scoff at God's method. Respect it; and profit from it, instead.

IV. CONFIRMATION, 2:1-4

Preaching is important because it is accompanied by the power of God. **“. . . My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,”** I Corinthians 2:4.

There is something mysterious about preaching. The message may be delivered by a man who lacks the skill of the orator or the wisdom of a teacher, but let his heart be filled with the Word of God, and strange power will accompany the proclaimed truth. The elder will be taught by the younger. The educated will be instructed by the unlearned.

A hardened sinner will suddenly be touched and brought to tears of repentance before the Lord. Is there an explanation for the mysterious element in preaching the Word of God?

The effect of preaching is not explained by human resources, but by divine power. Preaching the truth is accompanied by “demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” 2:4. Observe the explanation recorded in” Hebrews 2:3-4, **“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation: which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”** God empowers preachers. He makes preaching

important.

No preacher has the right to brag about the accomplishments of his ministry. One of the greatest of all preachers, the Apostle Paul, wrote, “. . . **We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us,**” II Corinthians 4:7. Preachers should be respected, but they should not be admired unduly. Every true man of God would repeat the words of Simon Peter, “. . . **Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? . . . the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus . . . and his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong . . .**” Acts 3:12, 13, 16. All real men of God testify, “To God be the glory.”

God's power accompanies the publishing of God's Word. His power is manifested through response to the Word sent out by radio and television, in church services, through personal witnessing, and on the printed page. God honors His Word. His power accompanies preaching in every form.

V. CONSEQUENCE, 2:5

Preaching is important because it produces faith in God. “. . . **That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,**” 2:5.

God is so good that He arranged that the believer's faith would not be set in men. Even the best-intentioned man is imperfect. He may promise and not perform. He may design and not do. The old adage, “The best laid plans of mice and men oft go astray,” is true. How disappointed the believer would be, if he were required to trust in finite and changeable man.

Your faith stands, on the contrary in the power of God. That is one reason He chose the foolish things, weak things, base and despised things of the world to confound the wise, to overpower the mighty, and to overthrow the highest. That way, when the victory comes, there will be no question but that it is God's doing. “. . . **That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory the Lord,**” I Corinthians 1:31.

Remember when you were saved? Someone told you the gospel story in simple terms. God took that message and made it meaningful to your heart. When you turned in repentance, He saved you by His power, totally apart from human merit or effort. It was God's doing. Your faith must rest in Him.

Dear Christian, love in Christ the man who declares to you the Word of God. “**Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine,**” I Timothy 5:17.

“... We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake,” I Thessalonians 5:12, 13. Yes, love and respect your preacher.

Love your preacher, but keep your trust in the Lord. **“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man,”** Psalm 118:8. Often some person has put too much confidence in a preacher only to be greatly hurt when he stumbled. You will never be disappointed in the Lord. The greatest honor you can pay your preacher is to trust the Lord with all your heart.

Expose yourself to the preaching of the Word. Attend the preaching hours in your church. Sit near the front of the auditorium. Follow the reading of the Word in your Bible. Take notes on the preacher's comments, concerning the meaning of the Bible. Keep your heart open for a message from God. Pray for both his speaking and your listening. Give more attention to the content of the sermon than to the style of the speaker. Preaching can be a blessing to you.

James 1:21, 22 provides instruction on “How to Hear A Sermon.” (1) Before the sermon begins: **“... Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness ...”** (2) while the sermon is delivered: **“... Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save you souls.”** (3) After the sermon has ended: **“... Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only ...”** Preaching is important to God and to man! Let it be important to you!

Questions

1. What is preaching?
2. How is a man called to preach?
3. What subjects should be preached?
4. Why do some discredit preaching?
5. How does God save and mature people through preaching?
6. What signs of God's power accompany preaching?
7. What does II Corinthians 4:7 mean to you?
8. What does I Thessalonians 5:12, 13 mean to you?
9. What blessings have you received from preaching?
10. How can you make the preaching hour in your church more profitable to you?