

Preaching and Preachers

preacher does not just say things with the attitude of 'take it or leave it'. He desires to persuade them of the truth of his message; he wants them to see it; he is trying to do something to them, to influence them. He is not giving a learned disquisition on a text, he is not giving a display of his own knowledge; he is dealing with these living souls and he wants to move them, to take them with him, to lead them to the Truth. That is his whole purpose. So if this element is not present, whatever else it may be, it is not preaching. All these points bring out the difference between delivering a lecture and preaching, or between an essay and a sermon.

A special word must be given also, though in a sense we have been covering it, to the element of pathos. If I had to plead guilty of one thing more than any other I would have to confess that this perhaps is what has been most lacking in my own ministry. This should arise partly from a love for the people. Richard Cecil, an Anglican preacher in London towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth said something which should make us all think. 'To love to preach is one thing, to love those to whom we preach quite another.' The trouble with some of us is that we love preaching, but we are not always careful to make sure that we love the people to whom we are actually preaching. If you lack this element of compassion for the people you will also lack the pathos which is a very vital element in all true preaching. Our Lord looked out upon the multitude and 'saw them as sheep without a shepherd', and was 'filled with compassion'. And if you know nothing of this you should not be in a pulpit, for this is certain to come out in your preaching. We must not be purely intellectual or argumentative, this other element must be there. Not only will your love for the people produce this pathos, the matter itself is bound to do this in and of itself. What can possibly be more moving than a realisation of what God in Christ has done for us? Any attempt therefore to consider and to understand it should move us profoundly. Notice what happens to the great Apostle himself. He starts off with an argument designed to convince us of our sinfulness and lost condition and utter dependence on Christ. But the

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moment he mentions that Name he seems to forget his argument and bursts forth into one of his flights of great eloquence. He is moved to the depths of his being, and he writes some of those glowing passages that should move us also to tears. It is the contemplation of what God has done for us in Christ, and the suffering involved, and the greatness of the love of God toward us. 'God "so" loved the world . . .'

This element of pathos was a great characteristic of the preaching of Whitefield, one of the greatest master preachers of all the ages. It was David Garrick, the great actor of the eighteenth century who once said that he wished he could even utter the word 'Mesopotamia' as Whitefield uttered it! He also said that he would gladly give a hundred guineas if he could but utter the word 'Oh!' with the same pathos as Whitefield did. Modern sophisticated man may laugh at this, but it is only when we begin to know something of this melting quality that we shall be real preachers. Of course a man who tries to produce an effect becomes an actor, and is an abominable impostor. But the fact is that when 'the love of God is shed abroad' in a man's heart as it was in Whitefield's pathos is inevitable.

This element of pathos and of emotion is, to me, a very vital one. It is what has been so seriously lacking in the present century, and perhaps especially among Reformed people. We tend to lose our balance and to become over-intellectual, indeed almost to despise the element of feeling and emotion. We are such learned men, we have such a great grasp of the Truth, that we tend to despise feeling. The common herd, we feel, are emotional and sentimental, but they have no understanding!

Is not this the danger, is not this the tendency, to despise feeling which is an essential part of man put there by God? We do not know what it is to be carried away, we no longer know what it is to be moved profoundly. You remember Matthew Arnold's description of religion. He said that 'Religion is morality tinged with emotion'. How typical of Matthew Arnold, and how wrong; how completely blind! 'Morality "tinged" with emotion.' Just a 'tinge'. It would be rude and impolite to have anything more than a tinge. The 'little gentleman' never

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shows his emotion. Do not forget that Matthew Arnold was the son of Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of the well-known public school at Rugby. He taught that the real gentleman never shows his feelings but always keeps them under control. That outlook seems to have permeated the life of the Church and many Christians. Emotion is regarded as something almost indecent. My reply to all that, once more, is simply to say that if you contemplate these glorious truths that are committed to our charge as preachers without being moved by them there is something defective in your spiritual eyesight.

The Apostle Paul, as I say, could never look at these things without being moved to the depth of his great soul. Let me give one illustration of what I am saying. You remember how in Romans 9, 10 and 11 he has been working out the particular problem of the Jews. Where do they come in, what is their position in the light of what he has been saying about justification by faith, and so on? He has taken up this subject, and he has argued it, and has reasoned it out, and he has arrived at his great conclusion. But he does not leave it at that; he bursts forth,

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

That is sheer grand emotion. Note that I say emotion not emotionalism. I reprobate that. There is nothing more hateful than a man who deliberately tries to play on the surface and superficial emotions of people. I have no interest in that except to denounce it. My contention is that when a man really understands this truth which he claims to believe he must be moved by it. If he is not, he does not belong to that company, that category which includes the great Apostle himself. But it has become the fashion to dislike emotion.

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I remember how a few years back when there was a great evangelistic campaign in London, a man who was a leader in religious circles came to me one day and asked, 'Have you been to the campaign?' I said, 'No, not yet.' 'This is marvellous,' he said, 'marvellous.' He continued, 'People are going forward by the hundred. No emotion you know—marvellous.' He kept on repeating this 'No emotion.' What to him was so marvellous was that all these people who went forward in response to the appeal showed no emotion. This was something glorious. No emotion, wonderful! No emotion, marvellous!

What can one say about such an attitude? I content myself by asking a few questions. Can a man see himself as a damned sinner without emotion? Can a man look into hell without emotion? Can a man listen to the thunderings of the Law and feel nothing? Or conversely, can a man really contemplate the love of God in Christ Jesus and feel no emotion? The whole position is utterly ridiculous. I fear that many people today in their reaction against excesses and emotionalism put themselves into a position in which, in the end, they are virtually denying the Truth. The Gospel of Jesus Christ takes up the whole man, and if what purports to be the Gospel does not do so it is not the Gospel. The Gospel is meant to do that, and it does that. The whole man is involved because the Gospel leads to regeneration; and so I say that this element of pathos and emotion, this element of being moved, should always be very prominent in preaching.

Lastly I have to introduce the word Power. I am not going into this at length now because this is so important that it deserves a whole section to itself, not in the next lecture but some time later. But, if there is no power it is not preaching. True preaching, after all, is God acting. It is not just a man uttering words; it is God using him. He is being used of God. He is under the influence of the Holy Spirit; it is what Paul calls in 1 Corinthians 2 'preaching in demonstration of the Spirit of power'. Or as he puts it in 1 Thessalonians 1:5: 'Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance . . .' There it is; and that is an essential element in true preaching.