

Philosophy of Preaching

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The primary way that God communicates to His people today is through His revealed Son as portrayed in the written Word. God has demanded that men of God clearly preach His Word. The preaching of God's Word involves the following elements.

1. The preaching of God's Word obeys God's command to "preach the Word."

Paul charged young Timothy to "preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2). Elsewhere he commanded Timothy to "devote himself to the public reading of Scripture and to teaching" (1 Tim 4:13). He is commanded to teach and preach the principles laid forth in Scripture (1 Tim 6:2). God demands that His Word be preached—not human ideas, speculations, ideologies, humanistic worldviews, or pithy anecdotes (2 Tim 4:2). It is God's Word that must be proclaimed with all power and authority.

2. The preaching of God's Word glorifies God and accomplishes His sovereign purposes.

God said in Isaiah 55 that His Word will never return to Him empty but it will accomplish that which God sovereignly decreed (v.11). In other words, preaching is never in vain. God uses the proclamation of His Word to glorify Himself, to save sinners who believe, and to further harden sinners and ripen them for judgment. Preaching never fails. Preaching is never useless. It always accomplishes what God sovereignly plans.

3. The preaching of God's Word includes the *reading* of the Bible and the *explaining* of the Bible.

In Nehemiah's day, Ezra read from the Law of God and he read the book and he translated it and gave the sense so that the people understood the reading (Neh 8:8). This is expository preaching simplified. The preacher has the primary task of reading the Scriptures and explaining the Scriptures. He is to read, explain, and apply the Word of God to the hearts, minds, and lives of his hearers. Paul told the Ephesian elders that he did not shrink from declaring to them anything that was "profitable" (Acts 20:20). This is what the preacher is to do. He is to take God's Word which is sufficient for life and godliness (2 Tim 3:17), read and teach the Word (1 Tim 4:13) and exhort and plead with people using sound doctrine (Titus 1:9) to believe in Christ and turn from their sins (Acts 20:20-21).

4. The preaching of God's Word takes priority over everything else in the local Church.

If one were to survey the pastoral epistles (1-2 Timothy & Titus), he would find many commands to preach and teach God's Word with all authority. He would be hard-pressed to find Scriptures on singing, building projects, drama, Sunday school, etc. The primary goal and the foremost ministry of the local church must be the clear proclamation of God's Word.

Some more elements that the preaching of the Word of God should contain are as follows.

1. Preaching must be expository.

Expository preaching is defined as the clear teaching of a passage of Scripture by reading it, explaining it, and applying the author's meaning to the hearer's lives. The best method to preaching is to preach verse-by-verse through books of the Bible to ensure that the vast sum of God's Word is faithfully taught. There no skipping over theological doctrines if one preaches expositively. One cannot preach on hobby-horses every week if he preaches expositively. And, this is how God wrote the Bible for us—in complete books. Therefore, the preaching of God's Word must be expository.

2. Preaching must be gospel-centered.

The Bible is about the gospel. The entire span of biblical revelation finds at its apex the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament points to the coming Messiah. The Gospels proclaim that the Messiah is here. And the Epistles and Revelation proclaim the theology about this Savior. Every passage in the Scriptures—both Testaments—can lead to the cross. Jesus is not found *in* every text but every text can lead to *the cross*. Thus, every message should give a presentation of the gospel—man's sin, God's holiness, Christ's work, saving faith, and obedience to Christ's Lordship.

3. Preaching must be urgent.

People will die. Heaven or hell awaits every soul that departs this life. The preacher must always preach with an urgent tone begging his hearers to repent and believe in Christ. And for believers he must preach urgently that his people walk in piety, holiness, and Christlikeness. There is no time to put off Christ for a week. As Richard Baxter once said it, we must preach as a “dying man to dying men.” Every sermon should be pictured as the *last sermon* one would hear before he died and his soul went to heaven or hell. Preach with a sense of urgency knowing that for those who don't believe in Christ, hell awaits them. This an urgent message to proclaim.

4. Preaching must be passionate.

The preacher is the conduit through which the rivers of Scripture flow to the hearers. The preacher must believe what he preaches. He must be passionate about what he preaches. He must be convinced of what he tries to convince his hearers of. He must be persuasive, bold, and passionate. If the preacher tries to persuade people to believe in Christ the he should plead with them in a passionate, heart-wrenching, and

5. Preaching must be practical.

The preacher is to take God's Word and preach what the author intended his original audience to understand in a way that is clear, practical and relevant. All of Scripture is "profitable so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John all preached and begged people to repent of their sins, believe in Christ, and walk in newness of life. Preachers must preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and tell people how to apply God's Word to their lives. The preacher is to help the people know how to be "doers of the Word" and not merely "hearers of the Word" (James 1:22)

6. Preaching must be Spirit-empowered.

The Holy Spirit works through the preaching of His Word to soften hearts to the gospel and harden hearts to the gospel. The preacher's power resides not within himself or in his oratorical skills but in the power of the Word as the Spirit takes His Word and accomplishes His sovereign purpose (cf. Luke 4:18). When Paul preached, the gospel came with "power and with the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:5). Paul preached in the power of the Spirit (Rom 15:19). The preacher is to faithfully be Christ's witnesses near and far by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Thus, for expository preaching to be effective, it must be Spirit-empowered. The preacher must not depend on his own ability, wit, or strength, but on the sovereign empowering of God the Spirit to guide his every word as he proclaims the Scriptures.