



# SBAOC Weekly Update

## NEWS & PRAYER REQUESTS

*If you have any news, prayer requests, or events that you would like to have included in this update, please email the information to Tony Mattia at [spurgeonassociation@gmail.com](mailto:spurgeonassociation@gmail.com) or call us at 785-456-8513.*

## IS PREACHING FOOLISH TODAY?

*Fred A. Malone*

It takes little Bible study to see that preaching, the proclamation of God's Word, was God's chosen method for evangelism and edification by the Old Testament prophets, our Lord and His apostles. The question is: "Is preaching foolish *today*?" Should we follow the example of the prophets, our Lord and His apostles? Is it necessary to obey Paul's command to Timothy: "PREACH the word!"

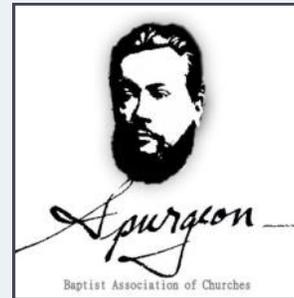
In the Bible, preaching is the proclamation (heralding) and explanation of God's revealed Word to man. It is an outward call to all men to "be still, and know that I am God." It is a call to be still and listen to God's revelation to man; to quit dwelling on our own thoughts and start thinking about God's truth. It is God's chosen way and authoritative charge to reveal, herald, His truth to mankind (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

The New Testament provides many examples of proclaiming God's Word. These include the Sermon on the Mount, Peter's message at Pentecost, Paul on Mar's Hill and the Epistles read in their entirety to the attentive and listening churches (Colossians 4:16). This act of "proclaiming" is different from activities such as personal witnessing and interactive teaching, which the apostles did as well. Preaching is not about equal interaction between the speaker and the hearer. It is about being still and listening to God's proclaimed truth which is wiser than man's thoughts.

Do you believe preaching is the God-ordained means to bring sinners to bow before Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Do you believe preaching is the God-ordained means to edify and strengthen the faith of God's people as they gather for congregational worship? I would venture to say that most Baptist preachers would give a hearty "Amen" to these questions. However, all is not well in our Baptist Zion.

The Regulative Principle and Preaching

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### PURPOSE STATEMENT:

We unite as an association of Southern Baptist churches in order to manifest the glory of God above all. We purpose to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. We covenant to strengthen and support one another, motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

*"If there is no church... should you not commence one?" C. H. Spurgeon*

## COMMENTS ON OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

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*I am not denying the value of a careful discussion and study of the Scriptures in that way; but I do feel constantly the need to warn myself and everybody else against becoming so immersed in the mechanics of Scripture that we miss its message. While we should be concerned about the harmony of the Gospels and similar problems, God forbid, I say, that we should regard the four Gospels as some kind of intellectual puzzle. The Gospels are not here for us to try to draw out our perfect schemes and classifications; they are here for us to read in order that we may apply them, that we may live them and practice them.*

*Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

Preaching is often regarded as "foolish" today. It is being set aside in many churches in favor of more culturally "relevant" methods to evangelize the lost and edify the saints. Many consider plays, athletic displays, panel discussions, musical extravaganzas, movies, multi-media presentations, clowns, puppets and sacred dance as "more relevant" to our media generation than a "long and boring" sermon from the Bible heralded by one man speaking to men. Yet, with his last words, Paul commanded, charged, Timothy: "*Preach the Word!*" He did not call him to adapt this method of proclamation to the entertainment methods of his own contemporary culture. In Paul's day Greek plays, athletic contests, magic shows, circus acts, give-and-take debates were all popular forms of entertainment. Yet Paul did not encourage churches to wed the gospel to such forms for the sake of evangelism or relevance. No! Paul held to preaching, the proclamation of God's Word to men-to the very end of his life-no matter the culture, Jew or Gentile.

He commanded Timothy to "*Preach the Word*", to herald the revelation of God to men, no matter what the hearers think or desire:

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

Even in a first-century A. D. culture of sports, drama, philosophical debate and inductive educational discussion, Paul steadfastly observed "the regulative principle" of Scripture. That is, he practiced what God had commanded and regulated by revelation to him: *preaching* God's Word! Our Lord commanded Paul to preach and Paul commanded Timothy to stay with God's method no matter what the hearer thinks.

Yet, one youth director of an SBC mega-church recently ridiculed the idea of children listening to a boring "talking head" (preaching) when they will pay more attention to a children's show format filled with comedy, music, skits, onstage dancing, plus a relevant message in their language. Poor Paul, he should have known better than to have Ephesians read in its entirety with the children present (Ephesians 6:1-4). They must have been bored out of their skulls to have to sit still and listen to God's infallible, saving, Word! Paul should have been more creative for the children-more relevant!

Our Baptist forefathers would have considered these "relevant" and "creative" innovations in our worship services to be a violation of the biblical regulative principle of worship. Yet this principle is the very reason we are Baptists. It is the "forming principle" of Baptist churches. We only baptize according to the actual commands and examples of Scripture-confessing disciples alone. To



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violate the regulative principle of Baptist worship and practice, by substituting preaching with creative methods, is to deny the theology that shaped our identity!

Preaching and teaching God's Word is the primary God-ordained means commanded in the regulative principle of Scripture to bring sinners to Christ and to edify God's people. "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Our Lord and His apostles commanded:

" ... and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

" ... but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

Preaching is the heralded manifestation of God's truth to men. It is not meant to be a debate, nor entertaining. It is meant to call men to be quiet and to listen to God's revealed truth; then, to respond to God's authoritative truth with faith. To substitute innovative and unauthorized methods in our worship services, which rob the hearers of Christ's method and words, is to harm their eternal souls.

God has ordained sinners to be still and know that He is God through the proclamation of His Word to their deaf and fallen ears. It brings Him glory when the Holy Spirit gives them ears to hear His infallible Word and be saved by faith in the truth-proclaimed by the foolishness of preaching!

Preaching God's Word seems foolish to our culture; of course, it always has been that way. Yet through this "foolishness of preaching," God honors Himself to show that salvation is a miracle, not of man's doing and man's creative methods. Man in sin is dead and blind. Newer methods or more innovative approaches cannot move his will or awaken his heart. Only the Word of God proclaimed, as it is applied by the sovereign work of the Spirit, can bring him hope and life.

If we say we believe in God's infallible Word as the

authority of our faith and practice, then we must follow God's commands and examples in preaching to men. We must allow Scripture alone to regulate our message and methods. The issue today in the SBC is not Scripture inerrancy, but the sufficiency and authority of Scripture for all matters of faith and practice.

All Means to Save Some?

But, you say, "Paul was willing to try new methods, any method, to save sinners." Was he? Let us look more closely to what he actually said:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:19-27).

Paul states here that he was willing to forgo the abrogated Jewish laws of clean and unclean foods in his personal behavior in order to witness to Gentiles. If he was with Jews, he observed the Jewish ceremonial laws that foods might not be a stumbling block to hearing the gospel preached. This personal accommodation of his behavior was to save those with whom he ate, to let nothing hinder his preaching of Christ! Paul did not give up his method of preaching to cultural accommodation

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and pure pragmatism!

Paul never used the contemporary means of Greek play-forms, or called on a Greek athlete for a testimony or power-lifting display, to get more acceptance of the gospel through cultural adaptation; though he could have done just that. Rather, he used the metaphor of athletic contests, running and boxing, to illustrate how he disciplined himself to be a faithful witness, especially in his preaching! "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" does not mean that Paul had a license from God to invent new means to evangelize or edify. He is speaking of his own personal accommodating behavior to the Old Testament law, or not, while he kept faithfully proclaiming, preaching, heralding the gospel both to Jew and Gentile! He believed that both his message and method should be regulated by God's revelation.

#### Pragmatism over Preaching

Blatant pragmatism, the darling of today's churches, cannot be justified from Scripture. "Whatever works" is a denial of the sufficiency and authority of inerrant Scripture to guide both our message and our methods. The lack of committed and Bible-filled preaching in favor of pragmatism is killing our churches today. Those who are committed to biblical, expository preaching of the Sacred Text are often accused of "boring sermons" or "preaching over the heads of our people." Yet, ironically, many Bible and PCA churches are growing by that very method.

The truth is that shallow preaching and pragmatic programming is killing our SBC churches. This is why we see so many of our SBC members fleeing to Bible churches, PCA churches and independent churches to find serious preaching and teaching of God's Word. If someone in the SBC agencies had the courage to poll how many members and pastors of these Bible-teaching churches are former Southern Baptists, they might be unpleasantly surprised!

Instead of blasting "traditional preaching" as the reason why churches are not growing (which is false), we need to be asking why tens of thousands of SBC churches are not growing due to shallow preaching and pragmatic

methods. We need to ask why the many baptisms using pragmatic, unbiblical methods is producing a crop of uncommitted church members. Our SBC rolls are full of them!

Every time a church substitutes another "new method" which robs the hearer of the words of Christ proclaimed, they are robbing the hearer of the words through which faith comes. If God has commanded preaching as the foolish means to save sinners, then those who disobey God and use other "worldly wiser" means are being foolish-with the eternal souls of men.

Pragmatism in worship and witness is undermining biblical authority and the sufficiency of Scripture in the SBC. While we fight for an inerrant Bible, many ignore its commands and examples to form our worship and witness. The testimony of many young and old biblically-minded SBC pastors, who still believe literally in "preach the Word", is that they have had to endure much criticism for being "boring" while members seek other SBC churches with a more "relevant" worship style or children's ministry. Every time a church down the street turns to pragmatic, non-authorized means to attract the masses, a true biblical and preaching ministry is damaged, eternal souls are deprived of God's Word and God's authority in His preached Word is dishonored.

Dare we forget that the whole church was assembled when the Ephesian elders read Paul's letter to the adults and children (also an example of substantial reading of Scripture in worship)? Dare we accuse Jesus and the apostles of being "irrelevant" in their method of the proclamation of God's truth? Were they culturally insensitive to the felt needs of men? No. Few would dare to come out and say such a thing in public. But the public worship and evangelistic methods of many SBC churches are saying so. May God bring us to repentance!

Yes, Preaching God's Word is Foolishness

Paul said so.

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message

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preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Corinthians 1:21-25)

Preaching is foolishness when you consider that the Jews wanted spectacular shows of signs and wonders.

Preaching is foolishness when you consider that the Greeks wanted philosophical reasoning about how to live a happy life. Preaching is foolishness to today's sound-bite culture and seeker-friendly methods. But Paul would have none of that. He believed and followed "the foolishness of God" in obeying Christ's command to preach God's Word. He understood that God is exalted and glorified through "the foolishness of preaching." He understood that all men are spiritually dead and need to hear God's pure and unadulterated Word to be saved:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

God's wisdom and power is glorified through the foolishness of preaching. Those who think God needs the help of creative and relevant cultural methods to bring sinners to salvation have demeaned the wisdom and power of God to save through His preached Word and Spirit's regenerating work with the Word. They have denied the very truth and authority and sufficiency of the Word of God which they are so concerned that others believe.

The Foolishness of God

Those who reject or ridicule the priority of preaching God's Word to men are refusing to become fools for Christ's sake. For the method of proclamation of God's Word is, by God's own Word: "The foolishness of God." Paul refused to become a huckster of God's Word, but he was content to be a fool for Christ. If in preaching the Word of God, I should be called a fool, I am well content with that label. Paul said:

For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God (2 Corinthians 2:17).

We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor (1 Corinthians 4:10).

Paul refused to be a peddler, an entertainer of the gospel in order to be popular with the unconverted masses or wrong-thinking church members. He stayed with God's ordained message and method his whole life. He was content being considered a fool, without honor among men, for believing and preaching the Word of God.

Conclusion

Are you content with being a fool for Christ, dear pastor? Are you content with God's Word which defines the message and the method of your work? Or, do you so wish to be liked and considered "successful" by men that you are willing to reject God's method to bring His message to men?

We need a return to biblical preaching to be faithful to God and to be "successful" in His eyes. We need to believe that men are so dead in trespasses and sin and blindness that only "the foolishness of preaching" will glorify God when His preached Word and Spirit's work opens a blind, deaf and dead sinner's heart. We need to believe again that if anyone is saved through "the foolishness of preaching," it is a miracle of God! If that is being fool, then I am well content with being a fool for Christ through practicing "the foolishness of preaching." What about you?

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## PRAYER MEETINGS FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND REVIVAL

- Fellowship Baptist Church in Onaga, Kansas—5:00 pm on Sundays
- Trinity Baptist Church in Wamego, Kansas—8:00 pm on Saturdays

*The Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches is an association of Southern Baptist Churches that are united to manifest the glory of God above all. We set out to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. As an association of churches we are bound in mutual covenant to strengthen and support one another - motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture - by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.*

*We are a non-geographic association seeking to include any like-minded body of believers so that together we might better fulfill the great commission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our intent is to lean on His instruction and not our imaginations so that He is honored in all that we do. We welcome churches who adhere to the confessions of faith accepted by Southern Baptists throughout their history, including, but not limited to, the Second London Confession (1689) and the Baptist Faith and Message.*



Baptist Association of Churches