

# The Key to Good Preaching

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It has been pointed out that the gospel is the good news of God to a world filled with the bad news of sin. This good news of the gospel is that there is full and free salvation in Jesus Christ to all and everyone who believes on the Son of God. This gospel Christ has committed to the Church so that it is her calling to proclaim this gospel of salvation to all who will hear. This is also of extreme importance; for the preaching of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Through preaching God works faith in the hearts of His people. Through preaching God also sustains and nourishes that faith. The preaching is of utter importance!

The purpose of this article is to build on these ideas. The question we face is: what kind of preaching is the power of God to salvation. Not all preaching today is the same. There is good preaching and bad preaching. The one is powerful to salvation; the other is not. What is the difference between the two? What is the key to good preaching? We need to know. Our spiritual welfare and the salvation of our children depend on good preaching.

To find the key to good preaching we turn to Romans 10:13, 14. We quote from the American Standard Version which in this particular instance is more accurate than the King James or Authorized Version from which we normally quote. Here we read, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? In these verses the Apostle Paul through a device called rhetorical questioning establishes the connection between preaching and salvation. We notice several steps here: 1. To be saved we must call upon the name of the Lord (Jesus Christ). 2. To call upon the name of the Lord we must believe in Him. 3. To believe in Christ we must hear Him. 4. To hear Christ there must be a preacher sent and preaching. Of particular concern to us is the obvious truth of this passage that to believe unto salvation it is necessary to hear Christ through the preacher and his preaching. We must not just hear about Christ; we must hear Christ Himself. It is exactly this difference that distinguishes the King James Version from the American Standard Version in the passage just quoted. The King James has, "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?" According to the former, all that is necessary to believe unto salvation is that we hear of or about Jesus Christ. According to the latter, which is correct, we must hear Christ himself. In John 10:27 Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." In like manner we must hear the voice of Christ through the preaching. Christ must speak to us through the preacher and his preaching. Only then is the preaching powerful to salvation. Only then do you have good preaching.

To be this the preaching must be a faithful exposition of the Bible. It only stands to reason that if we will hear Christ through the preaching the preacher must bring the Word of Christ. He can not bring his own word or the word of men. Christ is heard in and through the preaching only in as much as the Word of Christ forms the content of the preaching. And that means that the preaching must be a faithful exposition of the Bible. For what is the Bible but the Word of Christ? It is that being the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, given to us by divine and infallible inspiration. Hence, when the Scriptures are expounded Christ is heard.

This brings us to the burden of this article. Good preaching is expository preaching. We have an example of this in Luke 24 which records the appearance of Christ to the two travelers to Emmaus on Easter afternoon. After these two disciples expressed their puzzlement over their Master's death and the reports of his resurrection, Jesus, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (v 27) The word "expound" here means "to unfold the meaning of, to explain." And that is what Jesus did. Proceeding book by book through the Old Testament Scriptures, He unfolded and explained their meaning as they prophesied concerning His own death and resurrection.

And this is also what the preacher of today must do. He must not bring his own word and opinion to the pulpit. Neither must he use the pulpit as a forum to speak out on all kinds of current issues - social, economic, political, etc. Nor must the modern day preacher in the name of preaching entertain with endless stories and gimmicks. The preacher who resorts to this kind of thing is a poor preacher. He fails miserably in his calling to be an ambassador of the mouth of Jesus Christ. He feeds you with stones instead of bread.

The preacher has but one calling, to expound the Word of God. This must characterize all of his preaching. That requires that he spend much time in preparation, delving into the exhaustless riches of the Scriptures. Understanding that the Bible is its own interpreter, he must study each and every passage in the light of its own context and in the light of the whole Bible. No passage may be taken out of context or interpreted in such a way that it contradicts the clear and plain teaching of the rest of the Bible. The revelation of God is one. It is characterized by perfect unity. Moreover, the preacher must study the Word of God prayerfully, seeking the guidance of the Spirit of truth whom Christ has promised would lead us unto all the truth. And that which the Spirit gives him to see and understand of the infallible Word of God, the preacher must preach. He must expound, set forth, unfold, explain the Scriptures as they are the inspired Word of God in Christ. He must not use the Scriptures as a springboard from which he starts his sermon and then proceeds to jump off onto some other topic of his choice. No, the Word of God must be expounded and set forth. Sunday after Sunday the people of God must come out of the house of God joyful that they have again gained deeper insight into the meaning of the Word of God. They have heard Christ through the preacher and his preaching because the preacher has faithfully expounded the Word of Christ. That alone is good preaching, the preaching which is the power of God to salvation.

There is much bad preaching today. There is much that ails the modern day pulpit. From one pulpit you will hear false preaching which misleads and deceives. From another pulpit you will hear shallow preaching which perhaps is not so misleading as it is lifeless. There is nothing to it at all. In either case the people of God suffer. They are not properly fed and soon become spiritually anemic. The cure for all this is expository preaching. Let the preaching be a faithful exposition of the Scriptures and it will be neither false nor shallow. Let the preaching be a faithful exposition of the Scriptures and we will hear Christ who will nourish us with the bread of life so that we are strong in the faith.

The preaching that you hear from Sunday to Sunday, is it good preaching?

If not, it is of utmost importance that you join yourself to a church which has good preaching. Your spiritual welfare and the salvation of your children depend on it.