

Week 9 | “Is Preaching Necessary”

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. **1st Thessalonians 2:13**
- B. Back in 2010 I came across a study that a research firm conducted among 70,000 Churches in North America. This study was done through phone calls, personal emails, and real-time data as 70,000 churches were questioned about various aspects of ministry within their ministries.
- C. After all the research was completed, and the results compiled, they put out a response of the top 7 things that the Church must do to stay alive. Number 1 among the list was, “*The Church must return to Christ-centered preaching.*” I’ll be honest with you, this greatly troubled me.
- D. My initial response was, “*what else are we talking about?*” It would make sense for something that’s not a church to speak of things other than God and the Holy Scriptures. But in God’s house and among God’s people what else is there to talk about then Christ and His Word?
- E. As a Charismatic follower of Jesus, or someone who loves the present work of the Holy Spirit, it’s my passion to see God’s family, especially those that I lead marry THE WORD with the SPIRIT. It was R.T. Kendall who rightly said, “*In the church today, we’ve experienced a massive, catastrophic corporate divorce. Some members of God’s family have chosen to go live with the Spirit apart from the Word, and others have chosen to live with the Word apart from the Spirit.*” This has led to devastating results within God’s family.
1. John Calvin taught that, “*the preached word and the inner testimony of the spirit should be distinguished but cannot be separated. Word and spirit are joined together organically; Without the Spirit, hearing the preached word only adds to the condemnation of unbelievers. On the other hand, Calvin admonished those who emphasized the Spirit apart from or at the expense of the word, saying that only the spirit of Satan separates itself from the word.*”
- F. The Bible knows nothing of this sort! The Spirit, Who was poured out powerfully upon humanity in **Acts 2**, is the same Spirit that inspired all 66 books of the Bible. And Jesus further stated in **John 16:13-15** that, “...when He (the Holy Spirit), the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you...He will take of Mine and declare it to you.”
- G. God’s ordained that His Kingdom will expand, and His eternal purposes will be accomplished PRIMARILY through Spirit empowered preaching.

II. IS PREACHING NECESSARY?

- A. It’s true to say, among the Church, preaching has fallen on hard times. When it comes to the weekend gathering of God’s family, it’s clear, by way of assumption that the preaching of God’s Word is no longer the primary way that God speaks to His family.

- B. Some people say, if a picture is worth a thousand words, then why are we talking so much, and painting so little within the Church? Some streams in the Church have replaced preaching with singing. Some have replaced preaching with power-points, movies, video clips and other means of technology. And some have replaced preaching with dialogs, group discussion's and dramas.
- C. These modes are helpful, and could be a part of our gatherings, in some way. But the question isn't ARE THEY HELPFUL but ARE THEY SUFFICIENT replacements for preaching. Is preaching necessary?

III. PAUL'S PREACHING AMONG THE THESSALONIANS

- 1. **1st Thessalonians 2:13** *"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing..."*
- B. This could sound like a lot of thanksgiving from Paul (*unceasing*). But if you shared the Gospel in many places, were beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, rejected by the majority of cities you entered, and often left for dead, you might rejoice also when someone received what God told you to say!
 - 1. Remember, Paul only led Lydia and her family, and the jailer and his family to Christ, during his time and terrible beating in Philippi, which was just 100 miles from Thessalonica. After just a three days journey into Thessalonica, and 3 weeks of preaching, seeing some salvations, he's driven out of that city at the possibility of death, or another brutal beating.
 - 2. From there Paul and the team traveled into Berea, where disgruntled Jews followed him from Thessalonica, and forced him to move on again, now into Athens. And while in Athens, Paul preached, and folks were willing to listen, but no big record of converts. And now in Corinth, he gets word that people heard, obeyed and allowed God's Word to change their lives.
- C. Of course, there's unceasing thanksgiving, *people heard the message, received it, and are allowing it to change their lives.*
 - 1. **1st Thessalonians 2:13** *"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God..."*
- D. In the Hebrew mindset, or through the lens of a Biblical worldview, HEARING and OBEYING are one in the same, they're never separated from one another.
- E. The word RECEIVED carries the concept of someone *receiving a tradition* that's passed onto them from someone else. Paul himself speaks this when talking about how he received the Gospel (**1st Cor. 15:3**).
- F. In **Matthew 13:1-23** Jesus tells a parable about 4 different types of soil, and how each of them receives the seeds that are sown into them. All four soils "hear" or *receive* the seed, but not all SIT UNDERNETH/SUBMIT or RECEIVE what's sown. They all hear, but not all obey, or choose to sit underneath.
 - 1. How do you respond to preaching? How do you respond to God's Words? Do you submit to them, or do you choose to stand over them?
- G. It's important to note that the Thessalonians didn't have a Bible like you and I have today. They weren't able to read God's Word, so to speak. So what they HEARD about God came from Paul and the missionary team as THEY taught. *This is a great defense for the necessity of preaching.*

1. When asked if George Whitefield would publish his sermons, *“he responded by saying, “I’m not opposed to doing that, but you will never be able to put on the printed page, the lightning and thunder (the anointing).” -Dr. Steve Lawson*
- H. Paul wasn’t the only preacher in Thessalonica, as he makes clear, *“...which you heard from us...”* Paul’s not speaking of his own unique preaching, but the supernatural event of preaching itself.
 1. *“God’s Words in your mouth, are just as powerful as God’s Words in God’s mouth.” –Reinhard Bonnke*
- I. The Thessalonians heard the Word of God EXTERNALLY, but they received it INTERNALLY; meaning they allowed God’s Word to take root within their lives, starting the process of radical *internal* transformation and *external* change (*a little leaven leavens the whole loaf*).
 1. **1st Thessalonians 2:13** *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God...”*
- J. Paul doesn’t rebuke the Thessalonians for thinking too highly of his preaching. And the reason is because he’s standing in a long line of prophetic voices who spoke the Word of God. Paul’s making clear, *“guys, what you heard, as you’ve acknowledged publicly was the Word of God, not simply man’s words, even though human preachers preached the message among you.”*
 1. *“When a preacher who is duly called and appointed by God speaks, it is as if God himself were speaking through him. The word of God is not distinguished from the word of the Prophet. God wishes to be heard through the voice of his ministers.” –John Calvin*
- K. To think that John came up with this on his own, would be to overlook what the Bible says happens during the preaching event;
 1. **Romans 10:14-15** *“How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent...”*
- L. Paul’s making clear here that salvation doesn’t happen in a vacuum/vortex; it only happens in a context where God’s Word is being preached. It was John Murray who rightly translated these verses to better read, *“...how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?”* John Murray further states;
 1. *“A striking feature of this clause is that Christ is represented as being heard in the Gospel when proclaimed by sent messengers. The implication is that Christ speaks in and through the Gospel proclamation.”*
- M. This helps us further understand **1st Thessalonians 2:13**, so that when the preacher preaches, Christ speaks. God’s voice is heard through the voice of the preacher expositing God’s Word. This is why people leave services and say, *“we’ve heard the voice of God”* or *“I’ve heard the voice of God today.”* It’s because they have! When the preacher preaches, God speaks.
- N. Beloved, if we let preaching go, if we substitute the preaching of God’s Word for other things, we lose the witness of God among us, and the process by which God desires to bring about salvation and sanctification in the lives of those who hear.

1. When Martyn Lloyd Jones became the Pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, he canceled everything in the Church except for the prayer meetings and the preaching. After his announcement, the theater club came to him asking what they were to do with the new stage that was built, he responded by saying, “*tear it down, and use the wood to heat the building.*”
 2. John Calvin rightly said, “*there is nothing more notable or glorious in the church than the ministry of the gospel, the word goes out of the mouth of God in such a manner that it likewise goes out of the mouth of men; For God does not speak openly from heaven but employs men as his instruments....God himself speaks through the mouths of His servants by His Spirit. Wherever the gospel is preached it is as if God himself came into the midst of us.*”
 3. The Puritans had a profound sense that God builds His Church primarily through the instrument of preaching. Puritans defined the primacy of preaching, or the primary role of preaching in these three regards;
 - a. (1) For God's sake—Because it is His Word that ministers are proclaiming, his honor that is at stake, and he does not think lightly of a minister's thoughts replacing his own.
 - b. (2) for man's sake—Because if the word preached is not God's word, it loses all its power and nourishment for men and becomes only hay and stubble.
 - c. (3) For the minister's sake—Because the preacher is given a ministry, not a magistrate; That is, he is called to be a servant, not the Lord, so he must not endanger his soul by bringing his own words but must remember that God, and not himself, can best determine what His hearers need.
- O. A low view of preaching, and the need for preaching, stems from a low view of the Word of God. And if you follow its results, they are disastrous if they are followed out to their ends. Meaning that we will have *few salvations, few people convicted, few people called into the ministry, few people walking in obedience, few people pursuing holiness, few people living in authentic community, few people engaged in spiritual practices of prayer, meditation, sabbath, solitude, fasting, and attending corporate gatherings.*
1. **1st Thessalonians 4:13** *“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the Word of God, which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”*
- P. It’s clear that the missionary’s team’s preaching among them produced fruit. It brought about significant transformation in their lives, and this is because preaching always accomplishes the task for which God intends (**Isa. 55:11**).
- Q. Paul’s full of unceasing thanksgiving, not just because of their salvation, but because their salvation brought about a new way of living, as their lives evidenced God’s grace in them.
- R. Is preaching necessary? Yes, in fact, it’s not optional for God’s family. We preach because this is the only effective thing that brings about *revival, and transformation in the lives of those that sit underneath it.*