

I Corinthians - part 8 - Preaching

I Cor. 1:17-21; 23-24; 2:1-5

--What is preaching? "that's simple; I know what that is." Be careful; it is when we think we know all there is to know about a topic that we cease to learn.

George Barna came out with a telling survey several years ago concerning why people attend the churches that they do. Ranked equal to doctrine as a reason was the quality of preaching (way its presented, the style and delivery) in other words the delivery ranked as high as the content.

--We consciously or unconsciously think of what happens up front here as a form of entertainment—that is not right.

--We put a high price on entertainment, and we get star struck by preachers and debate about who's the best.

--As a result, we have a strong tendency to put our faith in preachers rather than God and the message of God.

--That is very wrong and very scary, but it is also very old—it was happening in the early church—in the Corinthian church. **VV. 12-13**

--The Corinthians had their pet preachers, Apollos (mighty in the Scriptures), Peter (old style preacher); Paul (Not the best speaker but an excellent theologian)

--Because of their different styles and personalities, people chose sides over which one was their favorite for strictly worldly purposes.

--All three spoke the same unifying, life-changing, powerful message of the cross.

1. The church was promoting men, but Paul did everything he could to remove himself from out of the way of the message when he came there. I Corinthians 2:1-5

--**V. 1** – He didn't come to impress them with himself

--Paul didn't come as an orator, or a philosopher—He came as a witness.

--"I came to you to report the facts about God, nothing more."

--Surely, you can see the problem? — witnesses are not performers; messengers are not entertainers.

Churches are growing by leaps and bounds today, but is it for the right reasons?

II Timothy 4:3-4 Myths sell!

--The demand creates the supply.

--**VV.2-3** – He did this because the stakes were so high and the need was so urgent and the danger was so real.

Imagine God sending you to a graveyard to preach to the dead. He did that with Ezekiel! Would you fuss much over what you wear? Will you spend much time practicing your booming preacher's voice? Or, will you spend a lot of time on your knees making sure that you're saying exactly what the Sovereign God who alone can raise the dead wants you to say?

--When you step into that graveyard, your focus will be on those transforming words – now you understand Paul's predicament.

--**V. 4** – He was determined not to depend on style or experience, but on the power of God alone.

--**That's a real preacher and that is real preaching!**

Given the high rank that the Bible assigns to preaching, namely, that it puts to shame all human wisdom and knowledge in its effect; we need to spend a few Sundays being reminded of just what preaching is and isn't.

--It includes but is not limited to what I'm currently doing; preaching is also writing the truth, teaching the truth or conveying the truth by any means possible.

--It is accomplished whenever and however the message of God is communicated.

1. Preaching the Word transforms us – **Colossians 1:13**; how did He do that? **Romans 10:14; 17; Romans 6:17**

2. Preaching the Word moves us forward in Christ – **Acts 20:32**

--This is a very sober statement – **Acts 20:25** He's saying goodbye

--"I'm leaving you with the only thing you will need and the only thing that will get you through."

3. Preaching the Word is not easy – Seems like it should be though! What's so hard about telling the truth?

--It is hard because our world is sold out to a lie, and this makes it hard for truth tellers

John 3:19-20 – If you tell the truth, you'll be hated for it.

If you walk into a room where someone is sleeping and throw on the lights, will you get a loving and kind response?

John 15:18 – Why did they hate Him? What bad things did He do?

John 15:20b – This is the divide: they accept the teachings or they don't.

--If they don't, they aren't neutral; they are militant against those who teach the truth.

John 8:40; this is part of the reason why Paul says: **I Corinthians 2:3**

2. Remember, it's never the preacher, but the message that matters.

--During Desert Storm, there was an enormous amount of fear on the part of the Iraqis—they surrendered in droves almost before the battle had ever started.

--One of the things that they feared the most was artillery, the big guns, cannon and tanks in particular.

--Shooting things, the size of tanks at and over 18 miles away has a way of sobering people up!

--But it wasn't really the guns they feared as much as it was theaunched.

--Big guns firing blanks are just as loud but are harmless.

--The guns were only the devices through which these shells were launched.

--it's the shells that did all the damage, that were deadly, wreaked havoc; the shells were the reason they surrendered not the guns.

Preaching and Preachers are the guns. They are as effective or as harmless as what comes out of them.

--It's what comes out of them that makes all the difference.

I Corinthians 2:2, 5