

22ND PASTORAL CARE CONFERENCE – OCTOBER 2016
MESSAGE SERIES – THE EFFECTIVE PREACHER AND PREACHING
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MESSAGE 3 – THE PREACHER’S KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES AND PERSONAL LIFE

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In OT times, true preaching and prophesying were often introduced with the phrase ‘Thus says the Lord’ (e.g. Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6), or other words with similar meaning (e.g. Amos 3:1-2; 4:1-2).

Amos 1:3

Thus says the Lord, “For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not revoke its punishment,
Because they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron.

Amos 3:1–2

1 Hear this word which the Lord has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt:

2 “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

These words were used to introduce what the Lord wanted to say to the people. The Lord was speaking directly through the prophets. What the prophets spoke were the actual words of the Lord.

What about today?

THE SCRIPTURES AS GOD’S REVELATION

Today, in true preaching, the message must still have its source in God, in what God desires to communicate to the people. But generally, will not be of the form ‘Thus says the Lord’

God’s message does not come to us so directly today – though it is still possible. Great care must be taken when a message is presented as directly from God.

The Scriptures (both OT and NT) is God’s authoritative and infallible revelation. In it, we see His message and instructions for man.

2 Timothy 3:16–17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

‘Adequate’ can also be translated as complete, capable, proficient.

In the Scriptures, we have God’s primary source of revelation and the basis for true preaching.

All assertions and teaching about the Christian faith must be properly substantiated from the Scriptures.

Any assertion or teaching which contradicts the teaching of the Scriptures must be rejected as contradicting God’s revelation.

GOOD AND EFFECTIVE PREACHER/PREACHING

I will share five points concerning good and effective preacher/preaching – the first two points in this message and the other three in the next.

What I will be considering, and the principles involved, will be relevant to all believers for effective service and witness to the truth.

The first two points relate to the *preacher's preparation and readiness*.

The preacher's preparation is a life-long process – not just the period before giving a message – although for each message, he will need more intensive preparation.

1. Discipline and diligence in studying the Scriptures

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

These words are relevant for all believers, but even more so for the preacher/teacher, who has significant responsibility and will face a stricter judgement (James 3:1).

The preacher must have a good grasp of the truth God has revealed in the Scriptures – grasping its width and depth, and having accurate and wholesome insight into it.

It is important that the preacher reads through the whole Bible again and again, seeking to understand what God wants to communicate to us through the Scriptures – especially the major truths and principles.

He has to learn to grasp what the Scriptures as a whole teaches on various issues – not just what specific words, phrases, verses or passages appear to teach.

2. Quality of life and personal development

1 Timothy 4:16

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

The personal life of the preacher is crucial to the effectiveness of his preaching ministry.

The preacher has to continually nurture his relationship and walk with God, and his life has to be one taught and dealt with by God.

The preacher has to learn from the Lord over the years, not just from the Scriptures, but also through various situations of life.

Important areas the preacher needs to learn from the Lord will include:

- How to relate with people and understand what is going on in their lives
- How God perceives the meaning of what is taking place in various situations
- What God is seeking to bring about and how the forces of darkness operate
- How to deepen in his knowledge of God and his relationship with Him – growing in insight into who He is – His greatness, perfection, sovereignty, power, wisdom, holiness, love, grace
- How to walk with God and trust God – looking to Him for guidance and enabling
- How to put into practice the truths and principles revealed in the Scriptures – growing in insight into the meaning of these truths and principles and how they may be applied in daily living

The preacher's study and insight into the Scriptures and the truth, and his reception and practical outworking, complement each other.

What the preacher has learned in his own walk with God (including struggles and difficulties he has gone through), his own spiritual growth and character development, provide the foundation for effective preaching and communication.

They help the preacher to communicate the truth in a way the hearers can understand, identify with and apply in their own contexts.

Illustration from Paul's life

What the apostle Paul went through helped him communicate the truth and helps us appreciate what he is trying to communicate.

Going through afflictions and experiencing God's comfort

2 Corinthians 1:3–5

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,
4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

Learning to trust and depend on God in the midst of trials

2 Corinthians 1:8–10

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;
9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;
10 who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,

Principle of the cross leads to ministry of life

2 Corinthians 4:7–12

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;
8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing;
9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;
10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.
11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.
12 So death works in us, but life in you.

Renewal of inner man – the eternal perspective

2 Corinthians 4:16–18

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Not receiving God's grace in vain – how we commend ourselves as servants of God

2 Corinthians 6:1–10

1 And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—
2 for He says, “At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you.”
Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation”—
3 giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,
4 but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions,
in hardships, in distresses,
5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,
6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,
7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand
and the left,
8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true;
9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,
10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet
possessing all things.

Strength in weakness

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting
myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep
me from exalting myself!
8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.
9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”
Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may
dwell in me.
10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions,
with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

The truths and principles Paul taught were precious and meaningful to him in his own life and outworking.

They were not merely mental concepts, or truths and principles to which he merely paid lip service.

Because they were real in his own life, they were reflected in his ministry and *contributed significantly to the effectiveness of his preaching ministry and his ministry generally.*

Paul’s ministry thus has *spiritual reality, substance and weight.*

If we have not been learning from the Lord and growing in Him, our preaching and ministry may appear good and effective, but in reality they may be hollow because there is little spiritual reality, substance and impact.