

22ND PASTORAL CARE CONFERENCE – OCTOBER 2016
MESSAGE SERIES – THE EFFECTIVE PREACHER AND PREACHING
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MESSAGE 5 – THE EFFECTIVE PREACHER

In the first message I addressed the question: *What is effective preaching, a good message?*

Effective preaching is the effective communication of the truth that God intends for the hearers in a particular context. A good message persuades and moves hearers in the direction of what God desires of them.

In this concluding message, I will highlight some major features of *the effective preacher* – and illustrate them with two biblical examples – Jeremiah the prophet from OT and the apostle Paul from NT.

The *effective preacher* is:

- One who has been called and sent by the Lord to preach as God's servant on God's behalf.
- One whom the Lord equips and enables, and to whom God grants revelation and insight.
- One with a vision and a sense of mission – that is of the Lord.
- One who faithfully communicates the truth God desires of him in the respective contexts.

A popular speaker who appears to be an effective preacher may not be so.

A good speaker or orator who is intellectually able and has good general knowledge, able to communicate well and persuasively, in an interesting manner that holds the audience's attention, may not be a good preacher, even when he speaks on Christian issues and quotes the Scriptures.

Why? Such a speaker may not even be a Christian.

Even if he is a Christian, what he communicates may be of little or no spiritual benefit – or worse, what he says may be detrimental to God's work. It may be wrong teaching or the speaker may have a negative, arrogant spirit.

Essential to good preaching then is the *effective communication of what God desires to communicate and accomplish in a particular context, by God's enabling, leading to ministry of spiritual life and positive impact on receptive hearers.*

Let us now look at two biblical examples – Jeremiah the prophet from OT and the apostle Paul from NT.

There are aspects in their contexts that are rather pronounced, but the principles are relevant to all preachers.

JEREMIAH – THE EFFECTIVE PREACHER

Jeremiah was:

- Called and sent by the Lord to preach as God's servant on God's behalf.
- One whom the Lord equipped and enabled, and to whom God granted revelation and insight.
- A man with a vision and a sense of mission that was of the Lord.
- Jeremiah faithfully communicated the truth God desired of him.

Jeremiah 1:1–9

1 The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin,

2 to whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.

3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the exile of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

4 Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
And before you were born I consecrated you;
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

6 Then I said, “Alas, Lord God!

Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth.”

7 But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’

Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,
And all that I command you, you shall speak.

8 “Do not be afraid of them,

For I am with you to deliver you,” declares the Lord.

9 Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me,
“Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.”

(vs 4-9) God called and sent Jeremiah as a prophet of the nations, and equipped and enabled him to speak as God's servant, on God's behalf.

Jeremiah was a man with a vision and a sense of mission that was of the Lord – that sustained and enabled him to endure much pain and suffering.

The message and truth that God desires the preacher to communicate can sometimes be like a burning fire within. The preacher feels constrained by God – almost like a compulsion to preach what God has laid upon his heart.

Jeremiah 20:9

But if I say, “I will not remember Him

Or speak anymore in His name,

“Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire

Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in,

And I cannot endure it.

PAUL – THE EFFECTIVE PREACHER

Let us now look at the NT example of an effective preacher: The apostle Paul.

I have already referred to Paul and his ministry. I will now highlight some aspects.

1. Paul was chosen by the Lord for ministry.

Acts 9:15

But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

2. Paul was appointed as a preacher.

Note the words of Paul's own testimony:

1 Timothy 2:7

For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

2 Timothy 1:11

for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

God called Paul to preach the gospel – the good news of God's kind intentions for us in Christ in the fulfilment of His purposes.

2 Timothy 1:8–11

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,
9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,
10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,
11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

3. Paul was a man with a vision and a sense of mission.

This sense of mission was of the Lord and it sustained and enabled him to endure much pain and suffering.

Acts 26:15–20

15 "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?'

And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

16 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,
18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

19 "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,

20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

Some comments on this passage:

- (V 16-17) Paul was called and sent by the Lord as early as the time of his conversion on the road to Damascus.
- (V 18) Here, we have the task Christ entrusted to Paul.
- (V 19) Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. He faithfully carried out God's calling and the ministry entrusted to him. Here, we see God's call and man's response of obedience and co-operation.
- (V 20) Paul kept declaring and preaching the message God desired of him.

It is critical that the clear vision and strong sense of mission be of the Lord.

4. God equipped Paul, granted him revelation and insight, and enabled him to fulfil the ministry entrusted to him.

Ephesians 3:1–11

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—
2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you;
3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.
4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,
5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been
revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;
6 to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow
partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,
7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me
according to the working of His power.
8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the
unfathomable riches of Christ,
9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden
in God who created all things;
10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the
rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.
11 This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our
Lord,

Paul was eager to preach the gospel.

Romans 1:15

So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

This was not out of fleshly enthusiasm, but out of deep conviction of its significance.

It became almost like a compulsion for Paul to preach what God had laid upon his heart – he felt constrained.

1 Corinthians 9:16

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

THE LORD JESUS APPOINTING, TRAINING AND EQUIPPING PREACHERS AND SENDING THEM OUT

Let us look at a key verse in the Scriptures which shows us how the Lord Jesus appoints preachers, trains and equips them and then sends them out to preach.

Mark 3:14

And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach,

‘He appointed twelve’

- The twelve apostles were appointed by the Lord Jesus; they were not volunteers.

‘so that they would be with Him’

- It was important for them to deepen in their knowledge of Christ, their relationship with Him, be trained by Him, and grow in their knowledge of the truth.

‘and that He could send them out to preach’

- Christ sends out preachers.
- He trains and equips them before they are ready to be sent out to preach.

I will conclude on an important issue for us to reflect upon and pay heed to:

SERIOUS MATTER TO SAY: “THIS IS WHAT THE LORD HAS DECLARED” WHEN IT IS NOT SO

It is a serious matter to say words to the effect: ‘this is what the Lord has declared’ – when it is not so. We need to exercise care because the Lord will hold us accountable.

Pay heed to a passage of severe warning from the Lord:

Ezekiel 13:1–16

1 Then the word of the Lord came to me saying,

2 “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration, ‘Listen to the word of the Lord!

3 ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing.

4 “O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among ruins.

5 “You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the Lord.

6 “They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, ‘The Lord declares,’ when the Lord has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of their word.

7 “Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, ‘The Lord declares,’ but it is not I who have spoken?” ’ ”

8 Therefore, thus says the Lord God, “Because you have spoken falsehood and seen a lie, therefore behold, I am against you,” declares the Lord God.

9 “So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord God.

10 “It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, ‘Peace!’ when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash;

11 so tell those who plaster it over with whitewash, that it will fall. A flooding rain will come, and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out.

12 “Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, ‘Where is the plaster with which you plastered it?’ ”

13 Therefore, thus says the Lord God, “I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath. There will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones to consume it in wrath.

14 “So I will tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation is laid bare; and when it falls, you will be consumed in its midst. And you will know that I am the Lord.

15 “Thus I will spend My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it over with whitewash; and I will say to you, ‘The wall is gone and its plasterers are gone,

16 along with the prophets of Israel who prophesy to Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace,' declares the Lord God.

- Some prophets of Israel saw false visions and spoke falsehood and yet they claim: "The Lord declares".
- Such occurrences are often associated with involvement with or under the influence of evil spirits.
- This issue applies directly to false prophets, false teachers, and false preaching and teaching.
- There are many warnings against this by Christ and the apostles in the NT.
- The principle involved can apply to Christians generally.

Let's consider two contexts where this principle is involved:

1. Exposition of the Scriptures and assertion of what the Scriptures teaches

The Scriptures is inspired by God. What it teaches is what God intends to communicate. Therefore, wrong assertions are serious.

When we are not clear, we should say we are not clear. We may present our view and support it with reasons.

We have noted the apostle James tells us that teachers will face a stricter judgement (James 3:1).

This is an area of deep concern. Many believers, including those who teach and preach, are not sufficiently careful when asserting categorically what they say the Scriptures teaches.

Many wrong interpretations, unwholesome, inaccurate and even seriously wrong teachings have been asserted as Scriptural teaching.

Such actions can adversely influence the lives of many – those who do this will have to answer to the Lord.

For example: There are various controversial issues on which evangelical believers have strongly asserted very contrary views and firmly pronounced views of others as errors. Clearly, not all of them are correct.

2. Assertion of God's revelation to believers at the personal level

Some believers freely use the phrase: 'God spoke to me'.

We need to exercise great care – otherwise we may be like the false prophets described in Ezek 13.

Is it really God speaking to us or are we being deceived by evil spirits? Or is it our own imagination or careless words?

Are we spreading deception to others, adversely affecting their lives and doing harm to God's work?

Without good grounding in the Scriptures, we can be easily deceived and led astray.

We are especially vulnerable when we have unhealthy longings for attention, prominence, power, and when we have other impurities in our heart or unwholesome aspects in our lives which the forces of darkness can exploit.

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