

Preaching

The Gospel does not change. Yesterday, today and forever it remains the same. The preaching of the Gospel is still the most important task of a man called to the ministry. In the closing decades of the 20th century the effectiveness of preaching is questioned. The demands upon the ministry have greatly increased. The rapid de-Christianization of our society has also influenced the church. When I was ordained in 1967, family life was far more stable than it is today. The vast changes in our society have also made their impact on the ministry. With the introduction of television as an entertainment medium expectations have changed. Television emphasizes seeing rather than hearing. Our society has become more visual aid oriented. But the emphasis in the Bible is on hearing and not on seeing. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom.10:17). A minister is more than a pastor or teacher. These functions only express two sides of his main task- the proclamation of the Gospel. Years ago they used the Latin phrase verbi divini ministri to describe the role of the minister. He was the minister of the Word, the instrument of the Spirit, an ambassador of Jesus Christ with an authoritative message. As God's messenger he must bring the Word of God. He must be faithful to it. He may not ride hobbyhorses in the pulpit. Through expository preaching, which is textual preaching or preaching from a passage of Scripture, the church will grow in faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The pressure to give in to trends and fashions is strong. There is a movement away from preaching, to make the Gospel popular for modern man. But there is nothing new under the sun. From the days of Amos and Isaiah to the present, "Prophecy unto us smooth things" has been a continued demand. As I see it, preaching is still God's way to gather and build the Church. Preaching two sermons each Sunday takes time and effort. The Sunday is gone and you are back to writing two new ones. And as you prepare sermons you want to listen carefully to the Bible. In the study you struggle with the text, examine what our forefathers said and taught about it and be aware of today's trends. "Don't go out for popularity," Charles Spurgeon used to implore his students, "preach nothing down but the devil, and nothing up but Christ!" I thank God for entrusting me with the proclamation of the Gospel. After 25 years in the Gospel ministry I still believe it is the greatest of all vocations.

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