

THEOLOGY OF PREACHING PAPER

A Paper

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Haylee Collins

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I. The Nature of Preaching

The act of preaching is an oral event in which the preacher explains the Word of God to a large group in a monologue format. In the case of expository preaching, the preacher studies the text of Scripture and pulls out the original meaning of the text. After doing this, the expositor seeks to bring this original meaning to light for his or her hearers.¹

Jesus Christ Himself is our ultimate example of the message which we preach. Jesus preached that the Kingdom of God was near, and He urged for obedience and repentance from His audience as a result.² Following Jesus' example, the ultimate goal of preaching is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and inspire obedience in the lives of the hearers, whether that means coming to repentance and salvation or taking steps of growth in their relationship with Christ.³

II. The Bible as the Word of God

The message which the preacher proclaims is that which is found in the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God, and as such it is inerrant and inspired by God.⁴ The Holy Spirit inspired each individual author of the various books of the Bible without compromising the personality of the authors themselves.⁵ Because the Bible has divine inspiration, this means it is also authoritative. We can trust the Bible's authority to give us "God-breathed" instruction in matters of faith.⁶ Not only that, but the Bible is authoritative in its overall message, the Gospel. If the Bible is divinely inspired, then when Jesus says that He is the "way, the truth, and the life, He is giving correct instruction, and the preacher must communicate that important truth to his audience

¹ Unit 1: Course Introduction and Preaching Definitions PowerPoint

² Mark 1:15

³ 1 Corinthians 1:21

⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16

⁵ *Power in the Pulpit*, 60.

⁶ *Ibid*, 66.

III. The Calling to Preach

In a church setting, men are called to preach and lead the congregation as pastors. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 provides a description of an “overseer” of a church. Paul writes this so that Timothy knows what standards he as an overseer should strive for, but also so that he can teach future overseers the same standards. Later in the same letter, Paul tells Timothy that as an overseer, preaching is a significant part of Timothy’s responsibilities. Paul writes that Timothy should devote himself to “public reading of scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.”⁷ This insinuates that preaching is a major part of the pastoral role alongside the previous descriptions.

However, pastors are not the only ones called to preach. Because, as I stated previously in this paper, preaching is “an oral event in which the preacher explains the Word of God to a large group in a monologue format,” this does not have to take place in a church setting. For example, in the case of women preaching at mixed-gender conferences, I would argue that they often are using the same exegetical preparation process that a pastor uses to preach on a Sunday morning. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:3 that a prophet “speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.” This description of prophecy falls under the definition of preaching, and Paul doesn’t restrict prophesying to men because he writes of women prophesying elsewhere in the same letter.⁸ Therefore, both women and men could potentially have the call to preach even though the role of pastor is restricted to men.

IV. The Preacher and God’s Word

⁷ 1 Timothy 4:11-16

⁸ 1 Corinthians 11:15

The ultimate source and content of a preacher's sermon must be the Word of God. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:5, it is all about the gospel. If the preacher believes that the Bible is God's Word, then his sermons and even his everyday life, should reflect that belief. As we have discussed in class, expository preaching brings to light the original meaning of a Biblical text, so in order to engage in expository preaching, the preacher must study and know the Bible. In Peter's second epistle, he writes that God is the origin of all Scripture, and therefore God determines the meaning, not the preacher.⁹ The preacher's job is not to put his own meaning into the Word, but rather to pull out the meaning which God placed into the text. The preacher does not bring attention to himself, but points every hearer back to Jesus. He is to be the content of the sermon because He, as the Word of God in the flesh, is the ultimate content of Scripture.¹⁰

V. The Role of the Holy Spirit in Preaching

The Holy Spirit indwells in every believer, and the preacher is no exception.¹¹ The Holy Spirit calls different people to various callings, including the calling to preach, as He did for the Old Testament prophets.¹² The Holy Spirit, when He calls one to preach, will prepare the preacher for the task at hand. This occurs both in the preparation and proclamation of the sermon. In the preparation stage of the sermon, the preacher must continuously ask the Holy Spirit for guidance because He is the One who will illuminate the Scripture to the preacher.¹³ The Holy Spirit also plays a part in proclamation of the sermon. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:4 that the Spirit is the One who speaks through him, not Paul himself.

⁹ 2 Peter 1:19-21

¹⁰ John 1:1

¹¹ Romans 8:9-11

¹² Jeremiah 1:4-5

¹³ John 16:13-15

The Holy Spirit not only moves within the preacher, but He also moves within the hearer as well. The Holy Spirit convicts in response to people hearing the Gospel message, and He is the One who can change the hearts of people and bring them to repentance.¹⁴ In every aspect of the sermon, the Holy Spirit gets all the credit.

VI. How My Theology of Preaching Affects My Philosophy of Preaching

Theology affects philosophy because theology plays into how one puts things into practice. This is true for preaching as well. All of my beliefs concerning preaching will affect how I myself preach. In my philosophy, I will specifically discuss my theology concerning the Word of God, the calling to preach, and the Holy Spirit. I believe these three things are the most important for a preacher to consider because they refer to what we preach, who preaches, and who guides the preacher.

If I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, then I will take it seriously and seek to live by its standards. Not only that, but if the Bible is true and inspired, then I will seek to proclaim its truths in my preaching. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:5, what we preach is the Word, Christ Himself. We do not seek to glorify ourselves, but rather we seek to point people to God. If we want to point people to God, then it only makes sense to use His Word.

Concerning the calling to preach, my theology affects my philosophy in the sense that I believe that I, as a woman, can preach. I do not believe it is appropriate or God-ordained for me to preach on a Sunday morning in the church or to even pastor a church, but I do believe that the Bible allows for women to preach in other settings. This plays out two-fold. When I observe a woman preaching in the gathered congregation during the church service, I understand that this is a sin and should be treated as such. However, if a woman is preaching outside of the pastoral

¹⁴ John 16:8-10

role, then I understand that God has called her to it as long as she stays true to His Word in her preaching. No matter whether a man or a woman is preaching, what the hearer should look for is their consistency with God's Word because the Word of God equips the preacher and serves as the standard by which we judge sound doctrine and teaching.¹⁵

Lastly, my theology concerning the Holy Spirit affects how I preach because I understand that all of the work is not my own. The Holy Spirit is the One who guides me and illuminates Scripture as I prepare to preach. As I prepare a sermon, I regularly ask the Holy Spirit for guidance because I know that He is teaching me just like He will teach others by using me as His mouthpiece. He gets all of the credit for any sort of transformation and salvation that occurs as a result of my preaching because He is the One who convicts others of their sin and changes their hearts. I am merely the messenger. This takes away any pride or ability to boast on my part because I know that even the opportunity to preach is a gift from God.

In conclusion, my theology is vital to determining the actual process of preaching. I believe the Bible is the Word of God, and therefore, I will do everything I can to ensure that what I preach is consistent with God's meaning through His Word. I also realize that I do not preach out of my own power, but by God's power through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides me as I prepare and as I preach. For me to preach effectively, He must be involved in every step of the process. God's Word and the Holy Spirit are the center of the preaching task, whether a pastor preaches on a Sunday morning or if I preach in a setting outside of the church. It's all about God and what He can do, and I'm thankful to play a role in His great plan to reach people.

¹⁵ 2 Timothy 3:16-17