

The Elements of Worship: Preaching

I Timothy 4:11-16 & Psalm 95:6-8

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Introduction: We have considered previously 4 elements of worship: Preparation, Praise, Prayer, & Presentation. We come this morning to the 5th & final element – Preaching. Should preaching be part of a worship service? Consider the trend in some churches today to substitute drama or the pastor giving a “chat” or “talk” while sitting on a stool. Some in the “Seeker-sensitive” movement advertise their services this way: “There is no fire & brimstone here. No Bible-thumping. Just practical, witty messages.” “Services here have an informal feeling. You won’t hear people threatened with hell or referred to as sinners. The goal is to make them feel welcome, not drive them away.” “The sermons are relevant, upbeat, & best of all, short. You won’t hear a lot of preaching about sin & damnation & hell fire. Preaching here doesn’t sound like *preaching*. It is sophisticated, urbane, & friendly. It breaks all the stereotypes.” But can we say dogmatically that preaching is an element of worship that gives glory to God? This morning I will seek to answer that question from 2 texts of Scripture (from N.T. & O.T.), which teach us that preaching is indeed a necessary aspect of worship. Note with me that true worshipers are those who *hear* (or receive) & *heed* (or respond to) God’s Word in the preaching. Then I will ask you the question: “Have you been obedient to this element of worship this morning?”

I. Proper worship involves the *hearing* (or **receiving**) of God’s Word > I Timothy 4:11-16

- A. The first role of Scripture in public worship is its reading (its recitation) – “(public) *reading*” [This gives us the **text** – what people must hear, “*give attendance*” – “devote yourself” (ESV).]
1. This was of particular importance in that day (Bibles were scarce; not all could read).
 2. This is of practical importance in our day (God has spoken to us through the Bible & He is glorified when we listen to what He has to say – focus on God’s words, not man’s).
- Summary: This involves an accurate, purposeful reading, done carefully & with expression; it allows the Word to speak to the hearts of the listeners. (The pastor must be properly prepared.)
- B. The second role of Scripture in public worship is its revealing (its revelation) – “*doctrine*” [This gives us the **truth** – what people must know – involves teaching & explanation.]
1. Compare this explanation – II Timothy 3:15-17 – All Scripture is profitable (4 things).
 2. Consider this exhortation – II Timothy 4:2, “*Preach the Word...doctrine.*”
- C. The third role of Scripture in public worship is its requiring (its requirement) – “*exhortation*” [This gives us the **test** – what people must do! This is exhorting & applying.]
1. Consider the commands & promises of Proverbs 3:1-12.
 2. Consider the communication of God’s Word by the preacher – II Tim. 4:2, “*reprove, rebuke, exhort...*” Illustrate: Revelation 1:3.

Note: Up to this point, the reading, revealing, & requiring of the Scriptures is the responsibility of the preacher. Compare his responsibility to that found in Nehemiah 8:8 (enunciation, interpretation, & application). See the examples of preaching truth & exhortation in Mark 1:15 & Acts 2:40.

Summary: The purpose of God’s Word is to change lives (sinners to saints, saints to Christ-likeness). The Bible shows us what is right, what is wrong, how to make it right, & how to keep it right. God is glorified when we confess (admitting that God is right about our condition) & repent (seeking His forgiveness). Then we will grow in conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:28-29, II Cor. 3:18, & Eph. 4:13). Salvation should result in sanctification!

II. Proper worship includes the *heeding* of (or **responding** to) God's Word > Psalm 95:6-8
[Worship: appropriate action > "bow down" & Biblical basis > "He is our God"]

A. Worship is contingent on the Word being preached.

1. There is the possibility of the pastor declaring his thoughts rather than God's.
2. There is the possibility of the pastor failing to make clear what God is saying.
3. There is the necessity of the pastor expounding the text – "Thus saith the Lord..."

Summary: It is my prayer & earnest effort to tell you what the text says, what it means, & what you ought to do in response. I sometimes fail to make that application clear. I need to give you the **truth** (what you need to know) & the **exhortation** (what you need to do) in a clear, concise, statement of purpose [proposition statement > for this message: "True worshipers are those who *hear* (or receive) & *heed* (or respond to) God's Word in the preaching."]

B. Worship is contingent on the Word being received.

1. There is the possibility of the people not listening, but daydreaming (Ecclesiastes 5:3).
2. There is the possibility of the people not listening by refusing what is heard.
3. There is the necessity of the people to listen attentively to what God has to say.

Summary: "Too many listeners are ready to blame the preacher for their failure to comprehend, but the reality is that they may be responsible as well. Someone intent on worshiping the Lord must do his part to hear God's voice while the preacher presents the sermon" (Reimers).

C. Worship is contingent on the Word being heeded (responded to).

1. The Word preached should lead to **conviction**.
2. The Word preached should lead to **confession**.
3. The Word preached should lead to **consecration**.

Summary: Anything less than this indicates an indifferent, calloused, or hardened heart.

Conclusion: The evening message a few weeks ago was on the first 2 elements of worship: **preparation** & **praise**. To be prepared to worship involves getting ready to worship ahead of time & making worship a priority. We noted that praise glorifies God when we are careful as to *how* we sing & mindful of *what* we sing. As a result of that message, did you sense any need to be better prepared for worship or to demonstrate that worship is a priority in your life? Was worship a priority for you last Sunday, or did something else take priority? Are you more careful now as to *how* you sing & more conscious of *what* you sing? In other words, did you agree with God in your heart that you need to be prepared to worship & to be careful to praise Him in worship? We have looked at **prayer** as one of the elements of worship. We concluded the need to follow the pattern of prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) & the need to follow the leader in prayer (Matthew 18:19-20). Two weeks we looked at the element of **presentation** in worship – the giving of our tithes & offerings. Do you acknowledge that all you have comes from God & belongs to God, & that He has the right to tell you what you should do with His money?

God has given us His Word to correct something that is wrong in our lives or to supply something that is missing in our lives. If you are not responding to God's Word as it is preached, you have not been made more "*perfect*" (mature, complete, Christ-like), & you have failed to worship God in the preaching. The preaching of God's Word is to move the sinner to salvation or the saint to greater sanctification. If you refuse to respond to God's Word, whose fault is that? Is it God's fault? Is it the pastor's fault? Or could it be your fault?

May the Lord help us not only to **receive** His Word this morning but to **respond** to it as well. Our prayer ought to be, "Lord, show me what is wrong in my life that needs to be corrected & that which is missing in my life that needs to be supplied." Let me ask you: "Have you been obedient to the element of worship in prayer this morning?" Are you in need of being saved? Or are you in need of greater sanctification – to increase in Christlikeness?