

A Good Sermon

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

INTRODUCTION

- A. Illustration about the psychiatric patient saying, “There but for the grace of God, go I,” after the preacher’s sermon, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 285.
- B. Many have an idea of what a good sermon is: one where the preacher uses good oratory, one where the preacher uses good illustrations, one that makes us feel good inside.
- C. This morning, we want to explore Paul’s description of a good sermon.
 - 1. The Corinthian church was deeply divided, and one of their deepest divisions centered over who preached the best (1 Cor. 1:12).
 - 2. This division arose because they did not understand what good preaching was.
 - a. In these five verses, Paul seeks to dispel the Corinthians’ misconceptions about preaching.
 - b. Let’s explore what they needed to learn.

A GOOD SERMON IS NOT IN RHETORIC OR PHILOSOPHY, v 1

- A. When Paul went to the Corinthians, he did not go with excellence of speech or of wisdom.
 - 1. “Excellence of speech” refers to oratorical skill; “excellence of wisdom” refers to philosophical skill — Paul says that he did not come to the Corinthians and base his preaching on oratory or philosophy.
 - 2. Many of those in the ancient world based public speaking on the use of oratory and philosophy — they attempted to sound educated and renowned when they never said a word.
 - 3. You’ve, no doubt, heard preachers try that.
 - a. They have great public speaking skills and rely upon them, but they never make a solid point.
 - b. They discuss Scripture from a philosophical standpoint and talk over everyone’s head, and they never say a word that anyone can take home.
- B. Paul rejected such speaking when he declared to the Corinthians the “testimony of God.”
 - 1. The better translation is “mystery of God” rather than “testimony of God.”
 - 2. The “mystery of God” implies that what Paul proclaimed to the Corinthians could only be known through revelation from God.
 - 3. A good sermon is not based in rhetoric or philosophy when declaring the “mystery of God” because:

A GOOD SERMON IS JESUS AND HIM CRUCIFIED, v. 2

- A. The reason Paul did not base his sermon in rhetoric or philosophy is that he proclaimed Jesus and him crucified.
 - 1. Paul declared the greatest theme of all, why would he want to use rhetoric and philosophy?
 - 2. He proclaimed Jesus.
 - a. Immediately after his conversion, Paul proclaimed Jesus “in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:20); when Paul began his ministry in Corinth, he “testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:5).
 - b. Preaching Jesus would include:
 - 1) Preaching his life, what he did while on earth.
 - 2) Preaching him as the Son of God.
 - 3) Preaching obedience to him (remember Philip preached Jesus to the eunuch, but the eunuch knew that Jesus commanded baptism - Acts 8:36).
 - 3. Paul proclaimed Jesus crucified.
 - a. Paul needed to proclaim Jesus crucified, for in Jesus’ blood we find the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7).
 - b. Preaching Jesus crucified would include:
 - 1) Preaching the facts around his crucifixion to produce faith and repentance.
 - 2) Preaching his being the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

- B. Many want to get away from preaching Jesus and him crucified.
 1. This message is, for many, too unsophisticated for such a complex world — they want to preach a “social gospel” that calls for change in this world, they want to preach philosophically, etc.
 2. But, a good sermon is based upon Jesus and him crucified.

A GOOD SERMON IS WITH TREPIDATION, v. 3

- A. Paul came to the Corinthians “in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.”
 1. The reason Paul spoke “in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling” seems to be that his physical appearance was so lacking (2 Cor. 10:10).
 2. Paul was nervous as he preached among the Corinthians, for he was nothing special to look at.
- B. Preaching today needs to be with trepidation, with a sense of inadequacy, “in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.”
 1. Although those of us who preach may not be something great to look at, our physical appearance should not be the basis for our trepidation.
 2. We should feel a sense of inadequacy, because:
 - a. We are sinners - we stand before sinners, as sinners ourselves, and proclaims the “unsearchable riches of Christ.”
 - b. We will be judged based on what we teach.
 - 1) “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (Js. 3:1).
 - 2) If those of us who preach teach error, we will face a horrible sentence at Judgment.
 - c. What we teach has the power to change lives.
 - 1) Paul called the gospel “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).
 - 2) What I say from this spot has the power to influence the way you live; I dare not take that responsibility lightly.

A GOOD SERMON IS WITH SPIRITUAL POWER, v. 4

- A. Paul’s preaching was “not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”
 1. The Spirit aided Paul as he spoke among the Corinthians:
 - a. “Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 18:5).
 - b. The Lord spoke to Paul, saying, “Do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you” (Acts 18:9-10). Such encouragement from the Lord must have aided Paul’s preaching.
 2. Without any doubt, Paul performed miracles among the Corinthians to demonstrate he spoke with God’s authority.
- B. Those who preach today need to speak with spiritual power.
 1. No, those of us who preach do not have the miraculous measure of the Spirit; he does not speak directly to us; he does not aid us in performing miracles.
 2. But, as we speak from Scripture, we teach what the Spirit wants to be taught.
 - a. The Scriptures were inspired by the Spirit— “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).
 - b. As we speak the words of Scripture, we speak with spiritual power, for we speak the words of the Spirit.

A GOOD SERMON IS FAITH-PRODUCING, v. 5

- A. Paul preached to the Corinthians with spiritual power in order that the Corinthians’ “faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”
 1. Paul knew that if the Corinthians were to have proper faith, their faith needed to rest on God, not in man.
 2. Men change and fail, but God neither changes nor fails — We know that when we put our faith in God, we put our faith on bedrock, not something movable.
- B. Those of us who preach today need to preach in such a way as to produce faith in God, not ourselves.
 1. We need to preach in this way, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Faith does not come from hearing me preach, but by hearing the word of God.

2. That faith leads to salvation.
 - a. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 17:31).
 - b. Have you believed to salvation? Do you need to come this morning and be saved by faith and obedience to Jesus?