

WHAT IS BIBLICAL PREACHING?

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Every minister of the gospel is called by God to an all-consuming task – to preach the Word (2 Tim 4.2). It's not that churches today need *more* preaching in general; rather, churches need the right *kind* of preaching. So what is this *kind* of preaching that God requires? What must the man of God devote himself to? God blesses not just preaching but the right *kind* of preaching. So, in this essay, I will define biblical preaching with **four essential ingredients**.

1. GOD-FOCUSED

Biblical preaching is always God-focused. This means the source of the message is from God, the thrust of the message is about God, the end goal of the message is directly focused on God, and the spotlight all throughout the message rests only and always upon God. Contrary to many – if not most – pulpits and speakers today, the kind of preaching that God requires is one that is *God-focused* not man-focused. That is to say, the sermon is not driven by self-help formulas or entertaining messages that touch on trendy topics or self-improving pep-talks. God's man must devote himself to the in-depth study of *God* in the *Word of God* so that He preaches *only* what the text says so that God is the source, the sum, and the spotlight of the entire sermon. All that the man says in the pulpit, as he points to the Word, and speaks for the Lord, is always pointing to God and His character, His gospel, His essence, His requirements, His holiness, His sovereignty, His grace, His mercy, and His preeminent glory. The driving goal behind this essential ingredient of preaching is this: all people should leave every sermon *not* thinking: 'what a great preacher' but rather 'what a great, glorious God!'

2. SPIRIT-EMPOWERED

Biblical preaching is always Spirit-empowered. Preaching in man's strength leaves men unchanged, unaffected or, at best, temporarily captivated. But the humanly engineered shock fades away quickly without lasting results. But the preaching that is attended by the power of the Spirit, driven by the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, and filled with Spirit-inspired Scripture is what brings change – true, lasting, heart change. Preaching in the power of the Spirit speaks to the kind of preaching that transcends mere human chatting and hip dialoguing. This kind of preaching reaches far beyond the human emotions because the Spirit of God takes His Word and faithful biblical proclamation and drives it deep into the hearer's heart. Only the Spirit can convert the heart, convict a sinner of his iniquity, and change the believer more into Christlikeness. To preach in the power of the Spirit is to preach with unction. To have the unction of the Spirit in the preaching event speaks of the supernatural attending of the Holy Spirit Himself to the message that is from the Word, that is focused on Christ, that is faithfully exegeted, and that comes from the man who walks in holiness. To preach in the power of the Spirit comes with much prayer, biblical fidelity, holy zealotry, and a Christ-centered, Word-saturated sermon. Every minister must beg God to attend the preaching with power so as to produce God-exalting, heart-transforming results. Let every man of God entreat God for the anointing of the Spirit. For this is the only kind of preaching that can produce any kind of real, lasting effect. The weaker than man is, the stronger he is because the Spirit uses weak men who are faithful to the Word, who herald the biblical gospel, and who extol Jesus Christ so that the power of the preaching and the faith of God's people would not rest on the wisdom of men but on the power of God.

3. CHRIST-CENTERED

Biblical preaching is always Christ-centered. To preach a sermon without Christ is to preach an irreligious message void of any supernatural power whatsoever. To preach a message with no Christ is to exalt man and his wisdom and to debase Christ and His gospel. To preach a sermon with no Christ has no power to save, has no Spirit-saturated anointing, and no hope of converting or sanctifying. If a man were to preach a sermon without Christ he must as well stop preaching and never enter the pulpit again since he has squandered and forfeited his right to even be called a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But, on the other hand, true, faithful, biblical preaching always centers on Christ just as the planets in a solar system revolve around the sun. Christ is the sun, the center, the apex of all biblical preaching. Every text leads to the cross. Christ is must be in every sermon. Every text of Scripture may not present Jesus Christ or speak about His saving work, but every text of Scripture (yes, every verse!) leads on *to* the cross of Jesus Christ and His atoning work. Christ is the sum, the substance, the subject, and the seeker of every sermon! Indeed, every sermon points to a glorious Christ because true biblical preaching is comes from the Word of God and the Word of God points to the Living Word who came from God. Thus, if God is to bless a man's preaching, he must preach Christ and Him crucified. Preacher must herald the person of Christ, the offices of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the teachings of Christ, the miracles and works of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the deity of Christ, the demands of Christ, the claims of Christ, the Lordship of Christ, the sovereignty of Christ, the death of Christ, the atonement of Christ, the propitiation of Christ, the burial of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, the ascension of Christ, the exaltation of Christ, the intercession of Christ, the coming advent of Christ, and the coming Kingdom of Christ. Preachers cannot forget that all of heaven sings to the Lamb of God who sits on the throne and heaven's song is: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain' (Rev 5.9). So then, every sermon, in so far as it is faithful to the Word of God, will preach Christ and Him crucified! If a man chooses not to preach Christ, he should step down, sit down, and, in repentance, fall down.

4. WORD-BASED

Biblical preaching is always Word-based. If a sermon is to exalt God, be empowered by the Spirit, and center on Christ, then biblical preaching *must* adhere to the Word of God. The Scriptures drive the sermon, they are the source of the sermon, they are the substance of the sermon, they support the sermon, they serve to illustrate key points, and they imprint the gospel onto the hearts of the hearers. The Bible drives the preacher and everything that he says. He does not craft his sermon and *then* open his Bible to find some supporting verses that enhance his message. The Bible drives the preacher. The Bible captivates the preacher. The Bible presents Jesus Christ. The Bible is the living and active Truth of God that pierces men to their very heart of hearts. Preaching devoid of the Word is not biblical preaching, it's man-centered lectures. To receive the blessing of God in preaching, a minister of the gospel must have one hand pointing to the text of Scripture and another hand pointing to the audience so that the audience is directed to the text of Scripture repeatedly throughout every sermon. The herald preaches the Word because He believes that the Bible is inerrant and that it is infallible. He understands that it is inspired and authoritative. He knows that the Bible is living and it is active. He trusts that the Bible can convict even the hardest of obstinate sinners and melt even the stoniest of hearts. It is the Bible that exposes men's sins and brings their faults to their conscience so they are stricken, guilty, and understand that they stand condemned before the Law of God. Because the Word has all power, the preacher always has his open Bible while preaching! Never does he forget his Bible or close his Bible or make light of the Bible. Rather, he honors the Word, he points to the Word, he constantly refers to the Word, he preaches the Word, and he centers everything that he says on the written, sufficient, clear Word of God.