

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THROUGH PREACHING

But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour. *Titus 1:3*

Surely the ways of the LORD are marvelous and who is sufficient to be HIS counselor or to know HIS purpose and workings in the earth. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom 11:33) This is nowhere demonstrated any more clearly than in HIS determined purpose to bring the truth of HIS word to men through the instrumentality of preaching by fallible men.

HE had the whole pantheon of elect angels at HIS disposal which HE could have sent into the world, declaring HIS word, without any mixture of error or weakness. Yet it pleased HIM to raise up fallen creatures and endue them with power to declare the unsearchable riches of CHRIST. No man is, of himself, fit for this task nor do any possess the natural ability to perform it according to HIS grand design. Yet HE is pleased to use those whom HE calls to deliver HIS truth in no uncertain terms and to unapologetically declare the NAME of CHRIST in the earth.

Often the terms preaching and teaching are used interchangeably in the minds of men, yet there is indeed a difference between the functions of both as we see set forth in the scriptures. The LORD JESUS is of course the GREAT PREACHER and TEACHER who is the model of all of those who would follow in HIS steps. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." (Mat 4:23, see also Mat. 9:35)

We also see this dichotomy set forth concerning some of the Apostles. "Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also." (Acts 15:35) "Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." (Acts 28:31)

The word which is translated as "teaching" means literally to "learn", which of course is related to instruction in righteousness. One must be familiar with the scriptures in order to be a faithful teacher since such involves setting forth the doctrines that are taught there. Even as we see Paul's exhortation to Timothy, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2Tim 3:14-17)

This is that ministry of the apostles which Peter spoke of to the early church at Jerusalem. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:4) Paul speaks of this same function to Timothy as he encourages him to instruct the saints. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2Tim 2:2) For the LORD shall equip and raise up men to perform this task of the instruction of the saints in every age.

Many have made the mistake of thinking that it is possible to "instruct" men to enter the kingdom of GOD, or that by human reason and carnal repetitions of doctrine that they can enhance the understanding of those whom they would instruct. This was the error of the Jews who relied upon their traditions and learning. "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon

precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.” (Isa 28:13) Unless the LORD is pleased to apply this instruction to the heart, giving a man a love for it, such teaching is in vain, regardless of its depth and breadth. “In them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2Thes 2:10-12)

This “teaching” of the word of GOD is only profitable for those who have been given eyes to see and ears to hear. While any man can be “instructed”; only those who have been born again can “see the kingdom of GOD”. It is foolish for a man to rely upon mere doctrine, regardless of the lips which may speak that instruction. As Joseph Hart’s hymn says, “True religion’s more than notion; Something must be known and felt.” (Gadsby’s Hymns, #237)

Preaching on the other hand is quite a different endeavor even though there is some overlap between the function of teaching and that of “preaching.” Whereas teaching is primarily concerned with “instruction”, “preaching” is a proclamation or declaration of the Kingdom of GOD, primarily in the exaltation of our REDEEMER KING. A man must be familiar with scriptural doctrine in order to teach other men. Even as the LORD instructed HIS disciples, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.” (Mat 28:19) This is primarily an exhortation for them to “disciple” or “instruct” men in the ways and truths of the Kingdom.

Preaching, however, is not primarily concerned with the breadth of Bible doctrine but rather the heralding of the work of CHRIST and recounting HIS triumphs, primarily in that redemptive work which HE accomplished by HIS death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Whereas “teaching” is concerned with a myriad of doctrines and practices related to the life of the saints, preaching is solely concerned with declaring “JESUS CHRIST and HIM crucified.” It is impossible to “preach” the gospel of the Kingdom apart from that message.

Preaching is a mysterious exercise which the LORD is pleased to use in bringing “life and immortality to light” in the saints. Preaching does not confer life, nor is it in the power of the preacher to cause men to believe. Yet the LORD is pleased to use “preaching” to draw HIS people unto HIMSELF as they are caused to believe the gospel which is preached. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1Cor 1:21)

There are several ingredients of true “preaching”. First of all, the man who preaches must be sent. As Paul said, this was “committed unto me”. Men cannot just decide to preach nor can any man “preach” simply by opening his mouth, taking a text, or being on the program at a planned event. Now preaching may indeed occur in such a scenario but not because of it. The LORD must empower the man and enliven the words that are spoken. The same man may not be “sent” everytime he exercises his lungs, nor is every man who “preaches” necessarily doing so on a regular basis. The LORD may raise up a man to preach one time if HE so chooses, as we see illustrated with Jonah.

Secondly, preaching can only occur at “due times”, that is the “appointed time” or the “ordained moment.” This is demonstrated as Philip met the Ethiopian. HE always brings about the desired result of that DIVINE appointment. “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (Isa 55:11) What a privilege it is to be sent to such an appointment.

Thirdly preaching is the “manifestation” of the glory of the Blessed GOD. Preaching exalts one NAME, one SALVATION, and one REDEEMER. Preaching cannot occur when men are interested in gain of any kind other than the GLORY of HIM who is worthy of all glory. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” (2Cor 4:5-7)

So preaching has nothing to do with eloquence or intellectual prowess and study of the man whom the LORD is pleased to send. HE is able to raise up the stones of the earth to bring praise to HIS NAME, and HE often does. “And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom 10:15)