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A Philosophy of Preaching

Romans, Part LXV

Romans 15:4

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I. Homiletics 101

Homiletics is a fancy word for the study of _____. What is the purpose and point of preaching? If preaching is doing what it is supposed to be doing, then what will be the result?

⁴*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

II. Setting - Paul as a Preacher of the Scriptures

Paul mentions the Scriptures because he himself is using them to teach the Romans why they ought to *receive one another*:

- 14:11 - *For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God."* (cf. Is 45:23)
- 15:3 - *"as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me'"* (cf. Ps 69:9).
- 15:9-12 - ⁹... *as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." [Ps 18:49] ¹⁰And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" [Dt 32:43] ¹¹And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" [Ps 117:1] ¹²And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope." [Is 11:10]*

III. A Philosophy of Preaching

Paul teaches us that *the purpose of preaching is (1) to so instruct the people of God that (2) we may be equipped to persevere in the faith, confident of God's loving care, knowing that (3) all those whom the Father has justified through faith in Jesus, He shall most certainly glorify.*

A. Preaching unto Instruction (cf. 1 Tm 4:6; 2 Tm 2:14ff; 4:3; Heb 5:12-14)

First, the preacher is to preach unto instruction. The Scriptures were written that we might _____. Every follower of Christ is a disciple, and every preacher is a teacher who provides instruction to his people. So Paul explains to Timothy his task as a minister:

¹⁴*Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. ¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ¹⁶But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. (2 Tim 2:14-16)*

Consider a couple implications of this. First, sermons are not intended to make us feel good but to *instruct* us; not to tickle our ears (cf. 2 Tm 4:3) but to nourish our minds (cf. 1 Tm 4:6). Second, Christians are called to grow in learning (cf. Heb 5:12-14).

B. Preaching unto Perseverance and Comfort

The NIV helpfully explains the sense of the phrase *"through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures"*: *"so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."* So *the purpose of preaching is to so instruct the people of God that they may be equipped to _____ in the faith, confident of God's _____ care...*

1. Preaching is unto perseverance. (Gen 3:15; 12:3; 1 Pet 3:8)

The NKJV translates this *patience*, which is fine, but it is a *patient continuance* in something; so endurance, constancy, or _____. One of the things we learn from a careful study of the Scriptures is that God works slowly, steadily, organically from generation to generation to fulfill His purposes. Hence, faithful preaching must prepare us to _____ on the Lord (cf. Ps 40:1ff).

2. Preaching is unto comfort. (cf. Rom 8:31-35; Heb 2:14-15)

And why should we wait on the Lord? Because we know that the Lord loves us. This is the *comfort* of the Scriptures (15:4) – *comfort* here means consolation, solace, encouragement. The *purpose of preaching is to so instruct the people of God that they may be equipped to persevere in the faith, confident of God's loving care...* So David teaches us, “*Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord*” (Ps 27:14). Jesus died and rose again to grant us courage:

³¹What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (Romans 8:31–35)

C. Preaching unto Hope

Faithful preaching should be filled with, permeated by, and conclude in _____. Paul writes, “*For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience [perseverance] and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (15:4). Webster defines hope as “*confidence in a future event; the highest degree of well-founded expectation of good; as a hope founded on God's gracious promises...*” Hope looks to the future and knows that it is bright – not because it knows the future but because it knows what God has promised:

¹Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1–5 cf. 8:28-30)

Peter Leithart writes in his excellent little book *God of Hope*, “*A hopeless people lacks imagination, courage, vision, and the energy to act*” (ix). If the future is uncertain or bleak, why take risk? But without a willingness to take risk built on hope, a culture dies.

IV. Only God can give what Preachers Preach

⁵Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... ¹³Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom 15:5-6, 13)

V. Conclusion