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"THE PRIMACY OF PREACHING" ??

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

In putting together this relatively brief article, one big problem you encounter is the huge brick wall that is placed at the feet of many people who are under the influence and power of deception. Few things are sadder to see than church members and church leaders entrenched in deception. Many are literally like brick walls that have been painstakingly baked and hardened to the point that will actually keep a person from ever seeing the truth, even though the truth may be right before their eyes!

This unfortunately, is the hallmark of deception.

I know how difficult it is for a person to comprehend a different aspect of biblical truth that they are not accustomed to. It disturbs them at the very base of their religious life. It is very different from the way they have been taught. So, as a result, they turn away from truth without understanding it. They will refuse to study or examine the matter. This is terribly sad. This is the "working of deception" in action and is the state of the religious world in which we live today.

So in approaching this subject, let me yet once again remind you of the following Scripture and its importance in arriving at truth and understanding:

"Now the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually examined. But he that is spiritual examines all things, and he himself is examined of no man."

1 Corinthians 2:14-15

As you go over this brief article, please try to lay aside your preconceived ideas and prayerfully, with the attitude and spirit of the Bereans (**Acts 17:10-11**), consider the Scriptures and the mind of the Spirit therein.

A VERY BRIEF HISTORY

There is absolutely nothing whatsoever revealed in God's Word about the primacy and exaltation of a specialist who issues forth a **monologue** Sunday after Sunday, notwithstanding the literally myriads of messages to the contrary. One sad example can be found [here](#).

Even with just a very cursory study, it will become clear that the “*sermon*” and “*preaching*” concept that exists today in local institutional churches, along with its academic and professional type style, does not come from the New Testament Scriptures but rather from Greek culture itself!

As one author noted, “*The sermon was the result of syncretism - the fusion of the Biblical necessity of teaching with the unbiblical Greek notion of rhetoric. Such are the indications of the influence of Greek Rhetoric upon the early churches. It created the Christian sermon.*”

When Constantine arrived on the scene in the 4th century, it was at this time that many Greek and pagan practices were adopted into the churches mind-set and practice. One key element that came into being was that of “**Greek Rhetoric.**” After his “*conversion*,” Constantine built many “*Christian temples*” and even many pagan buildings were later converted to so-called churches.

At this time also, a clear class of “*church officials*” had evolved and it was Constantine who encouraged the use of these buildings for the “*church officials*” use. This was really the official beginning of recognizing buildings as *churches* as well as the beginning of institutional Christianity and the downfall of what “church” and “worship” truly means.

“With the conversions of such men as Ambrose, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, all of whom were trained in rhetoric and were quite popular as orators within the Greco-Roman culture of their day prior to their conversion, a new style or form of communication began to occur within Christian assemblies.

This new form of speech was marked by polished rhetoric, sophisticated grammar, and an undue emphasis on eloquence. Corporate teaching within many congregations was no longer delivered in normal or raw language, but began to take on an artistic form of expression. In some instances, the content of the teacher’s message was less influenced by biblical truth and more by abstract Greek philosophy.

Within time, corporate teaching became more of a form, designed to entertain and display the speaker's oratorical skill or colorful wit, rather than instruct and equip the saints for ministry. Eventually, when the "clergy-laity" division was solidified, only those who were

officially "ordained" and trained in the new forms of speech were allowed to address the assembly.

This did much to render the saints inactive and helped to promote the idea that only the "professionals" have anything worthy to say."

Again, these things are undisputable historical facts and is clearly evidenced in early Christian writings.

At this point, it might be noteworthy to mention that even the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians Chapters 1 and 2 didn't allow the worldly, pagan concept of rhetoric that he was most assuredly surrounded with, to persuade or influence him in the least in regards to his approach in proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom.

1 Cor. 1:17: *"For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to bring the good tidings: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void..."* **Verse 22:** *"Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom."*

1 Cor. 2:1ff: *"And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.... And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power....that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."*

THE EFFECTS

Many professing Christians today unashamedly say that they do not consider themselves to have "attended church" until they have listened to a lengthy sermon by their pastor. This is how the false notion of the "primacy of preaching" has so permeated the church and its adherents.

In many people's minds, the big theologians from the past are not remembered for their character or their servanthood, but for their great oratorical ability. Look around today and you can see that the "*great ones*" are those who are most eloquent and thunderous when speaking.

For some, the thing that actually keeps "*churches*" from splitting or dying is not a body of believers caring for one another; loving one another; serving one another, but the pastor's ability in the pulpit!

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES

When we look into the Scriptures, we see a much different picture than what we see and hear in local institutional churches today as it relates to their posturing of *"the primacy of preaching."*

The early church communicated and taught the truth concerning the kingdom of God much differently.

For example, when the apostle Paul was at Troas in **Acts 20:7**, the word *"preached"* that is used in the KJV (dialelogomai) comes from a Greek word which means *"to dialogue" or "carry on a discussion."*

This clearly contradicts what many *"preachers"* say and do. Take the example above where the link was given for you to peruse.

This particular preacher flatly comes right out and even coins a phrase and says, *"Preaching is not a dialogue. Preaching in **monological!** It is a monologue. It's a one-sided voice of the King."* And he basis this, using Peter's sermon on Pentecost in Acts Chapter 2.

Now, I'm not trying to single out this fellow as some isolated example. He gives a good and clear presentation of what is taught and believed almost universally among professing Christians as they meander about the halls of their local church institutions.

But for the apostle Paul, it was not a *one-sided* type of message, wrapped in deep and profound utterances, but a TWO-WAY type of message or dialogue for the very purpose of **edification** and **building up** the saints.

A chapter earlier in **Acts 19:8**, we see Paul again *"speaking boldly, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God."*

In **1 Corinthians 14**, we see the same thing again in regards to judging prophecies and using discernment.

In **Philippians 1:9-10**, the apostle prays that the people may *"grow in discernment that they may test the things that are better."*

In **1 Thessalonians 5:20-21**, we read about *"proving all things and holding fast to that which is good."*

You see as well in **1 John 4:1** where the apostle John urges the people to *"prove the spirits."*

In **Revelation 2:2**, Jesus commends them for *"trying or testing those who called themselves apostles, and were not, and found them false."*

Plus, don't forget the many references in Scripture to taking heed how we hear.

All of this says that some kind of dialogue and interaction was going on within the assembly. How could you “*test the spirits*” unless there is some opportunity during the meeting to ask questions and dialogue over the alleged teaching?

And this wasn’t done after the “*meeting was dismissed*” either! This wasn’t done privately with the speaker in a corner of the room where no one else can listen! NO. Contrary to what we’re hearing today, there is absolutely nothing “***monological***” going on here at all!

Even Paul’s acknowledgement of the necessity of “*factions*” among the Corinthian believers in order for “*those who are approved may become evident among you*”

(**1 Corinthians 11:19**) clearly tells us that dialogue, discernment, and differing opinions were all in vogue when they were assembled together.

Not one believer was “*sitting in their pew,*” naively and quietly swallowing the words of another.

Everyone was expected to discern and evaluate whatever was spoken at the time.

Remember that the apostle even commended the Bereans when they evaluated or tested his teachings (**Acts 17:11**)! This is not to suggest that Paul and the rest of the early believers never engaged in a monologue in certain cases and at certain times, but only that the Scriptural pattern is clearly one of dialogue and mutual interaction.

You can say that the early believers clearly had an “open system of communication.” But today, what do we see? Many prefer, and actually demand “*a closed one!*”

Is it any wonder today why so few professing Christians ever think for themselves and grow up spiritually? How can they; under a one-sided, “***monological***” system of so-called “*teaching?*”

The “*primacy of preaching*” leaves no room for the believer to think and to participate in the process. And so, with nothing to say, with nothing to ask, and with nothing to contribute, they are rendered uninvolved, apathetic, and poker-faced!

We find in the Scriptures that even when Paul and the others were speaking to unbelievers, there was almost always an occasion for the hearers to engage in dialogue and interaction. If this be true with unbelievers, how much more important when interacting with believers!

THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY

In the Scriptures, the word that you will find over and over and over again in regards to the early believers teaching and preaching in the synagogues is the word argue or dispute or reasoned.

In **Acts 9**, we find Paul in verse 29, “*speaking and disputed against the Grecian Jews..*”

In **Acts 17:2**, “as his custom was, Paul went in unto them, and for three sabbath days reasoned with them from the Scriptures”

At Athens, in **Acts 17:17**, Paul “disputed in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons,”

In **Acts 18:4**, Paul “reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.”

In **Acts 18:19**, we find Paul at Ephesus entering into the synagogue, and “reasoning or discussing with the Jews.”

Here is the great lesson and example of early preaching. The early churches preaching was not a monologue, but a dialogue! As one commentator said, “*It was not a question of one man telling a crowd of men; it was a case of a group telling it over together.*”

In so-called “churches” today, the “sermon” should always involve a dialogue; a discussion; a two-sided communication. This is scriptural. This is New Testament preaching.

The Bible is very clear. If however, you are hesitant or even unwilling to do so while “*the message is still in progress*,” **then at least**, at the conclusion, it should always be immediately followed by a general discussion, in the hearing and presence of the whole assembly, for it will be at this very point that the “teacher” has the great opportunity to communicate the message to its fullest degree!

REFORMATION? (Don’t hold your breath)

Repeating what was just said, if pastors are unwilling to have a give-and-take; a discussion; a reasoning and a discerning amongst the brethren while the message is being spoken (just like we have seen in the Scriptures) then at least, a question and discussion period should immediately follow on what has just been taught.

Think about it. What a great teaching moment and stimulating time that would be for questions, for comments, or even for any differing of opinions! What better way is there in directing the assembly to remember and to learn and grow in grace and knowledge on what the pastor had just so wonderfully labored to teach?

Do you want to see progress and joy in the faith of the saints? **Philippians 1:25**

Do you really want to see the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ? **Ephesians 4:12**

Would you really like to present every man perfect in Christ? **Colossians 1:28**

If so, why would anyone neglect, evade, or even outright reject such a Scriptural and mighty means of learning and communication? Do pastors truly believe that *"the primacy of preaching"* during the Sunday worship service is to be a major part of the learning experience for building up the people of God?

Horrifically, the answer is a resounding NO, they don't!

Many pastors will never allow this type of format because they are threatened or intimidated by any form of return dialogue within any public setting, either before, during, or after any message that has just been given!

The following are mainly five reasons why this is so.

Reason #1

Having a time for discussion and questions after a sermon will pose institutional and organizational issues because *"the leadership"* have deliberately set their *"order of worship"* in concrete, specifically designed for no participation, allowing exact time limits for everything else, with no flexibility or spontaneity within the corporate meeting.

Reason #2

Having a time for a congregational discussion, for questions, or for differing opinions is highly offensive to the man who sees himself and his opinions as above those who sit in the pews.

Reason #3

Having a time for questions and a time for dialogue either during or after the sermon may expose the speaker to the possibility of questions that he may not be able to answer. It may also reveal that his studies and preparation were perhaps, shallow. And it could show that he is not necessarily the Bible *"authority"* that he parades to be.

Reason #4

Fourthly, having a time for dialogue, questions, and a time for *"give-and-take"* will remove the image (albeit, false image) that is rampant in local institutional churches, that being *"the centrality of the preacher."* It will remove the spotlight; the center-stage from one man and will bring others into its realm, which can be very disconcerting to the man who has a huge ego to sustain.

Reason #5

Having discussions, dialogue, and questions is seen as disrespectful to the man who wants his congregation to be dependent upon him for all the answers. If the people were permitted to question, to dialogue, to discuss, and even perhaps offer a better answer than he can, it will tend to remove their dependence upon his wisdom for understanding the text of Scripture, and of course, that must never happen!

CONCLUSION

The present evil abuses in today's local institutional churches that are clearly exposed on this website have a wide range of effect in many areas of life. This is far, far more than a personality or temperament problem.

Take the false notion of *"the primacy of preaching."* Its roots run not only in a theological misunderstanding of the scriptures, but its roots run much deeper than that. Its roots run deep into a misguided soul which inwardly craves for a rigid, self-righteous, and condemning attitude. A soul that lusts and craves for attention; for power; for authority; for rule, and for control.

I've heard men who are thoroughly infected and wholly taken over with *"the primacy of preaching"* mentality, ridicule and mock **"love"** in an angry screaming voice.

Straight from their man-made soap boxes, they will also ridicule and mock sincere brethren who would dare to question or disagree with them on an issue of church doctrine or policy, labeling them as being *"divisive;" "disaffected;" "rebels;"* or *"having a bitter spirit."*

They behave this way because it is believed that somehow, *"Divine Authority"* has supposedly been bestowed upon them; that they *"stand in a holy office."* They believe that their words are the *"voice of the King"* and you dare not question that voice, let alone, *"their sermon!"*

This is why men with such an attitude and false theology can very easily step in between a husband and/or wife (because one of them is disagreeing with the pastor) and deliberately destroy marriages and families and feel that God is *"being glorified and His truth is being vindicated."*

This is why men with such an attitude and false theology can *"punish heresy with death"* as well.

All of these things have happened before and continues to happen as we speak.

Brethren, the false notion of *"the primacy of preaching"* is just another example of the shady practices and exploitations that is occurring inside these institutions. It makes *"untouchable popes"* out of pastors and bobble-head dolls out of those who follow them.

Can it be any plainer than that?

It is one of the dark foundations and marks of the unbiblical local institutional church system.

It is a man-made, man-sustained philosophy that is fueled by pride, greed, lust, power, money, and control, and NOT by Scripture. It is a philosophy which has gone far, far *"beyond the things which are written."*

"The primacy of preaching" scheme only encourages and **actually keeps** the saints in an infantile state and fosters an unhealthy dependence upon the preacher, exactly what it has been designed to do. It's not that people will never learn from a monologue sermon but only that the Scriptural pattern is clearly one of dialogue and mutual interaction.

To be never afforded the opportunity to publicly ask questions or make relevant comments during or after *"the message,"* clearly is NOT Scriptural.

So as a result, very little is expected of you, except of course for the strong admonitions directed in making sure that you return next week for the repeat performance!

This is the sad situation in today's local institutional church system. Will people ever learn? Will people ever change? Sadly for many, probably not, and especially in regards to the perpetrators themselves, seeing that:

"It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."

Ken Cascio

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Two related articles you might also be interested in:

- 1) [**"Are You A Berean?"**](#)
- 2) [**"Cattle and Sheep"**](#)

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