

1 Cor 15:1,2 **PREACHING - ITS GREAT OBJECT**

PRELIMS. Preaching is not popular today. Not only because of its **content** but also because it is an unpopular **medium!** People **prefer discussion** - and there is a reason for that! Discussion, in a way, gets people 'off the hook' for there is **not** the same **need to submit or commit/decide**, at a Bible Study! You just need to **consider!** You get the various views from which you can choose! Whereas preaching in a sense, **demand**s a response - positive or negative! You receive or reject what is stated in **authority** (if no authority, it is not preaching)!

Also, we live in an age of **sound-bites!** Short, pithy, **one-liners** are much more popular than a well **reasoned-out essay!** **Texting** with a **140 character limit**, is much more acceptable than a **researched treatise!** Punchy statements are much easier to swallow than an **educated lecture!** That being so, it means that we have **serious problems** for the Church. It means people will be **informed** and **persuaded** by a short, **unresearched, unexamined** sound-bite, by a short simple statement which gives no indication of any **implications** which may be involved in the statement!!

You may remember when I spoke 2 years ago on the 'Agony-Aunt' Bell Mooney in the Daily Mail. She said that her mail-bag was full of those who complained they were **lonely!** Mooney was amazed that in this day of **mass-communications**, texting, mobiles, emails, internet, blogs, so many people were **lonely!** But she said that although there was **contact**, it was **not** at a **meaningful level!** It was all on the **surface!** There was **no depth, or thought** in the communication - just a simple 'Yes', or 'No' without anything to **think about!** Well....

This is all **so different** with the **gospel!** Paul is here **reminding** us "*of the gospel!*" He says it was something which he **preached**, not discussed! And preached over a **period of time!** Now, of course he discussed it, the Scriptures tell us so, but it was also something which he most definitely **preached** and **proclaimed** with **authority** and with the **expectation** of a definite **response!** It was something to be "*received*" or rejected, (or as Paul puts it "*unless you believed in vain*")! **Twice** in our text he tells us he **preached** the gospel! Paul

also tells us he **preached** to the Gals and Thes. **All** the apostles **preached** the gospel to their audiences. The gospel **needs** to be **thought about** - considered - and **decided upon!** It cannot really be explained in **one** sound-bite! Paul said the gospel “*was manifested through preaching*” [Tit 1:3] The gospel is best understood and made clear by **preaching** it! There are so many **implications** involved in its testimony and challenge. It takes a lot of explaining and there are many considerations to be thought about! So short soundbites can be dangerous because it is not comprehensive and inclusive enough!

PREACHING and AUTHORITY

All authority is from God! Church and State! Pilate said to Jesus: “*Do you not know that I have **authority** to release you and **authority** to crucify you?*” Jesus replied: “*“You would have no **authority** over me at all unless it had been **given you from above**”* [John 19:10,11]

Preaching has an **authority!** God has prepared and appointed preaching as a special **calling!** Paul said he was “*appointed* (or) *ordained*” to be a **preacher** [1 Tim 2:7 & 2 Tim 1:11] The message which brings **eternal life**, Paul says was “*manifested in His word through the **preaching** with **which I have been entrusted** by the **command of God our Savior**”*[Tit 1:3] Preachers do **not** make up their **own** sermons! In the OT we have **Jonah** commanded to “*preach the **preaching** that **I bid** you*” [Jonah 3:2] and Jesus tells us about the Ninevites, how they **repented** - at the **preaching** of Jonah!

Even our Lord had to be **anointed** to preach! We do not read of Him preaching as a child, or as a carpenter, because He was being **prepared** for preaching! He was **learning** through suffering, and was “*being made **perfect/complete**”*[Heb 5:4-10]. He was ‘**called**’ and **appointed** as was Aaron. A time came when He said, the **Lord** “*has **anointed Me to preach the gospel**”*[Lu4:18] He sent out the Twelve to “*preach and to say ‘Repent...’*” [Mat 10:7] “*And He **ordained Twelve...that He might send them forth to preach**”* [Mar 3:14]

Paul commanded Titus “*to **rebuke** with **all authority**”* [Tit 2:15]. When Paul told Timothy not to allow people to despise his **youth** in

was in **connection** with his **ministry of commanding and teaching** in the Church and being a “*good minister of Jesus Christ*”[1T14:6cf] People are inclined to dismiss young and inexperienced teachers - but if they are ‘called by God’, they have His authority!

Official preaching on behalf of the Lord in the Church has an **authority** which is **important!** Much more important than some people think! Paul **himself** was **very concerned** about the **use** of his **own authority!** He was concerned that he would not **abuse** it! How lovely! He was worried that “*I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me*” [2Cor 13:10] Paul was **conscious** of the authority he received from God and he was conscious of his **accountable** to God for the proper **use** of it!

Even **Christ Himself** was conscious about what He said in His preaching: “*I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent Me has Himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak*”[John 12:49] “*The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority*”[John 14:10]! Christ spoke the words His Father gave Him to speak! So be same with preachers!

And of course there is the very **sore point** about authority in the Church, sore with some people at least, which Paul spoke about: “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man*” [1Tim 2:12] *So there is an authority from God regarding preaching the gospel. As already mentioned - this does not at all mean no one can explain the gospel or discuss it!

The CONTENT of and RESPONSE to PREACHING

The **content** of the gospel - Paul tells us plainly. “*I delivered to you...what I also received: that Christ died for our sins*”[3] Here is the gospel. A Man **died** instead of us! And that Man was Jesus Christ.

And He died “*in accordance with the Scriptures*”! There was a **plan** that he should die - it was no accident. Jesus **deliberately** died and was buried. But much more - He “*was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures*” [4] That is the good news of the gospel - He **rose** from the dead giving us all **hope!**

Now it is so clear that the gospel is very much **related** to the Scriptures! Everything here was **‘according to the Scriptures’**! So true preaching is preaching that is from the Scriptures! The **content** of the gospel and of true preaching is what the Scriptures tell us. The Scriptures are an **absolute** which provides truth and reality

Now this taking reality/truth from the Scriptures is **so different** from today’s understanding of where we find reality/truth! We live in a day when decisions are made from how you **feel** about a thing, or how a thing **works out well** for you! If a thing works well for us, then we ‘go for it’, it is **right** thing to do! Today there is a rejection of an **absolute** right/wrong, truth/falsehood - there is **no absolute** truth. **Pragmatism** is the order of the day - whatever **works out** for us and gives **us** what we want, then that is what we believe in. **Not so** with the gospel - the truth is *“according to the Scriptures”*!!

The **consequences** of our **response** to the preaching of the gospel are **immense!** According to the Scriptures our response is a matter of **heaven**, total bliss, or **hell** total agony! So it is very **important** how we respond to what the Scriptures say - to what is true preaching!

This doctrine **implies** that every time we hear the gospel, every time we have God’s Word explained to us from a called servant we are **accountable!** We have to make a **response** - a ‘yes’ or ‘no’! We are **not immune** from having to make a **judgment** on it! We **have** to make a judgment on what we hear.

Most people **do nothing** after hearing the gospel! But **that** too, is a response. When we do **nothing** about the gospel’s **call** and **demands**, we **have made** a decision! We have made a decision to **neglect** it! And the Scriptures say: *“how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?”*[Heb 2:1] **Neglecting** includes **doing nothing** about a thing. If you do nothing about your bank overdraft...what?

So, how is it with you today regarding the hearing the preaching of the gospel? I am doing just what Paul did here - *“Now I would remind you of the gospel I preached...”* Have **you** received it - or are you one of those who have *“believed in vain”*?β