

Pastors: Preach the Bible! Please!

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Many Pastors I hear these days are not good Preachers. It is because they do not have confidence that the Bible is the Word of God. Many evangelical Christians claim the Bible is the ultimate authority for Faith and Practice; but they do not see it as Authority. They have been cowed by those who teach there are no absolutes (except that one) or we can not trust, with any real confidence, what any book might truly mean, including the Bible. Lacking that confidence, they put their trust in what a group together might think a book means, at least for them at this time or place. They have confidence in the group process and trust interpretation and application by community consensus. There is no room in a sermon to declare "Thus says the Lord!", i.e.- the Word of the Lord (even though many repeat that response after the Lectionary Reading). Rather the Preacher tries to share what [he] thinks the Bible might be saying. [He] does not see [himself] as actually proclaiming the Oracles of God.

This sounds very humble. After all, who am I to declare what God has said about anything? I can share only my personal feelings or convictions on a matter. There goes the humility- "not God's Word, but Mine." I can not be so presumptuous, the Preacher says, to declare any absolutes from the Bible, but I am fully competent to share my own strong (absolute?) convictions on all kinds of things, such as the treatment of illegal immigrants, the war in the Middle East, Israel's treatment of Palestinians, the rights of women in the Church or, for that matter, the necessity for Pope Benedict to "step down" (one local RC Priest is a celebrity here for saying this in recent sermons- people applaud him when he does).

Among more traditional evangelical Preachers, there is also lack of confidence in Scripture as Authority and of our ability in the Spirit to understand it. They have been cowed by charges of fundamentalism, legalism, ignorant Bible-thumping, proof texting and the rejection of a God of Love who is open to change and growth in His relationship with people. Instead of any pronouncement of what God has said, they use Scripture as cover for fizzy bromides and air ball aphorisms about relationships, self-esteem and how we must be optimistic and always have hope. Brethren, Preach the written Word of God- the BIBLE! Please. Listen to Paul-

1 Cor 2:1 ¶ When I came to you, brothers, announcing the testimony of God to you, I did not come with brilliance of speech or wisdom. 2 ¶ For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. 3 ¶ And I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 ¶ My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and power, 5 ¶ so that your faith might not be based on men's [my] wisdom but on God's power.

6 However, among the mature we do speak a wisdom, but not a wisdom of this age, or of the rulers [or discussion groups] of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 On the contrary, we

speaking God's hidden wisdom

... 9 But as it is written: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what has never come into a man's heart, is what God has prepared for those who love Him. 10 Now God has revealed them to us by the Spirit, ... [the Scripture is the Revelation of God written] 13 We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. 16 For: who has known the Lord's mind, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

2 Cor 3:4 We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ; 5 not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from God. 6 He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant,

2 Cor 4: 1 Therefore, since we have this ministry ... we do not give up. 2 Instead, we have renounced shameful secret things, not walking in deceit or distorting God's message, but in God's sight we commend ourselves to every person's conscience by an open display of the truth. 5 For we are not proclaiming ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves because of Jesus.

2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.

2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

*2 Tim 4:1 Before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom, **I solemnly charge you; 2 proclaim the message; persist in it** whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching. 3 For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will accumulate teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear something new. 4 They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But as for you, keep a clear head about everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, **fulfill your ministry***

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