

Worship 8 - The Avenue of Instruction

(Number eight in a series of ten)

When the church gathered together in the first century, they were instructed in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). This instruction came in one or both of two forms—preaching and/or the reading of scripture. An example of preaching is found in Acts 20:7. Here Luke records that "upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." Also, Colossians 4:16 is an example of the reading of scripture. Paul writes, "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."

READING

This approach to instruction should not be underestimated. It is a viable and effective means of instruction. To Timothy, the evangelist, Paul wrote, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). The words "give attendance to" means "to attend" or "give heed." Notice that there were three areas in which Timothy was to give heed and that each of these build upon the previous. First was reading. This was the reading of scripture both Old and New Testaments. Then based upon that reading was exhortation. Exhortation is "to call a person to one's side." Thus, the exhorter based upon the reading calls the listener to faithfulness and obedience to that which was read. Finally, there is doctrine. Doctrine is teaching. It is through reading and exhortation that teaching is accomplished and doctrine is established. Another passage to consider is Revelation 1:3 which says, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." This is the first of seven beatitudes of Revelation. Notice that there is a threefold blessing in this passage. The first blessing is upon the reader. This was the public reading of scripture. Though the writer is speaking specifically about the book of Revelation, the application is the same for all inspired books. The second blessing is upon the hearers. This would be the congregation of hearers who assembled to hear the word of God read. The third blessing is upon the obedient—those who "keep those things which are written therein." Thus, the true blessing is not upon the one who just reads or who just hears but upon the doer (see Matthew 7:24-27; James 1:22).

PREACHING

One of the most comprehensive passages on preaching is 2 Timothy 4:1-5. Paul, the apostle of Christ, gives a charge to Timothy and to all preachers. The seriousness of the charge is seen in that it was given in the sight of God and Christ who shall judge. As we consider this passage, let us be reminded of the judgment to come when all men shall appear before the great judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul writes,

- (1) I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
- (2) Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.
- (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts

- shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
- (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.
- (5) But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.
- From this text, we learn...

The ELEMENT of Preaching

What Timothy and all preachers are to herald is specified as the word. The word is used in an absolute sense and refers back to "all scripture" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Similarly Peter wrote, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). This then is "the word of faith, which we preach" (Romans 10:8) and it is the preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16).

The TIME of Preaching

Paul wrote, "...be instant in season, out of season." The word "instant" means to be ready, stand by, be at hand and carries the idea of taking a stand. "In season" means when it is seasonable or under favorable circumstances. "Out of season" refers to those times when it is not opportune to preach. It is those unfavorable circumstances. Whatever the circumstances, the gospel preacher must be ready to proclaim, to herald, to preach the message of the King.

The MEANS of Preaching

By inspiration, Paul gives three means of preaching-"reprove, rebuke, and exhort." Reprove means to bring to proof, convict of errors. To the church at Ephesus, Paul wrote, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). To "reprove them" is to convict them of the errors of their ways so that they will repent. Rebuke is a stronger word than reprove and means to chide or charge. It can mean to give honor or blame and it often includes the just recompense of one's actions. Exhort literally means to call a person to one's side and, hence, to beseech or entreat. It is to call to action or to urge one to pursue some course of action.

The DEMEANOR of Preaching

"With all longsuffering and doctrine" describes the conduct of the preacher as he proclaims God's word. Hence, he speaks the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Longsuffering is sometimes defined as "long on suffering." It is brave steadfast remaining, forbearance, and patience. God is longsuffering toward us (2 Peter 3:9). Let us be longsuffering toward one another. Doctrine is the contents and authority of our steadfast preaching. The reason for steadfastness and doctrine is seen in 1 Timothy 4:16 which says "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

The REASON for such Preaching

In our text, Paul informs Timothy of the season that will come in which some "will not endure sound doctrine." That is they will not tolerate healthy teaching. Thus they take these three steps: They heap (accumulate or procure) to themselves teachers. These teachers are procured because they teach what they want to hear and they entertain and amuse. They are ear ticklers. They turn away their ears from the truth. Their desire for ear tickling preachers is greater than their need for healthy doctrine. Thus, the appeal is no longer truth but entertainment and pleasure.

They turn aside to fables. Actually this is the same step as the previous. In the process of turning away from the truth, they turn aside unto fables. Fables are stories or narratives and this is the content of their teaching. Thus, story telling teaching is contrasted with Bible preaching.

LEADERSHIP ROLE OF MEN

In 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Paul contrasts the roles of men and women. He writes, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8). In contrast Paul writes concerning women, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11-12). (See also 1 Corinthians 14:33-36 for similar instruction.) Thus, we must conclude and learn that men are to take a leadership role in public worship while women must remain silent in their subjective role. The reason for these roles assigned to men and women go beyond culture. Paul appeals to the creation (verse 13) and the fall of mankind (verse 14) for authority for such instruction. These injunctions are not based upon abilities nor inabilities, goodness nor wickedness, value nor worthlessness. They are based upon God's design for men and women.

Conclusion

There is no one who does not owe a great debt to instruction. This is true in the material realm as well as the spiritual. We come to believe by instruction (Romans 10:15, we grow in faith by instruction (Romans 10:17) and we are saved by instruction (1 Timothy 4:16). Thus, we are debtors to God for He "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

Instruction is a large part of the worship assembly. Let us be active in participating in it "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Concerning instruction, we participate "in spirit" by turning our minds in from the world and focusing on the message with singleness of heart and we participate "in truth" by demanding that the truth be preached. The ultimate goal of every faithful gospel preacher is that every person would hear the gospel and be saved (Colossians 1:27-28).

Dear reader, if you are a preacher or teacher, "preach the word," the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. If you are a hearer, demand gospel preaching and never tolerate anything less.

WORSHIP

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