

The Need for Preaching

Romans 10:14: “*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*”

As God eased the burden of Moses by putting his spirit upon seventy other men, 68 of them that congregated at the tabernacle began to prophesy, “and did not cease” (Numbers 11:25). However, two of the seventy men, Eldad and Medad, although they were “of them that were written”—prophesied in the camp without going to the tabernacle (Numbers 11:26). This startled a young man (Numbers 11:27), and moved Joshua to envy (Numbers 11:28), as they did not know that these were among the number of Moses’ chosen 70. The response of Moses, with the right heart which cares more about the work than the worker, was to express his desire for everyone to preach:

Numbers 11:29: “And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!”

The Necessity of the Preacher

In Ezekiel 22, God speaks to Ezekiel about the hopeless condition of God’s people, “the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation” (v.24). The cursed land was the result of every strata of persons being feigned: false prophets (v.25, 28), false priests (v.26), false princes (v.27), and false people (v.29). The only solution was to have “a man” that would, by his righteousness, stop the destruction of the land, “but I found none” (v.30; see Ezekiel 13:5). Just with one man, the nation could have been spared. So also, with one preacher, today as with Jonah for the city of Nineveh (see Jonah 4), or Moses for the people of Israel (Psalm 106:23), a nation can be delivered from desolation. But God, perplexed as none other, often stands looking around and searching the world in amazement, that he cannot find even one righteous man (Isaiah 59:16).

Jeremiah 5:1: “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, *if ye can find a man*, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.”

The Ministry of the Preacher

Like John the Baptist, who came “preaching in the wilderness of Judaea” (Matthew 3:1), a preacher is *a voice* who is speaking for the Lord (John 1:23), *a messenger* who is delivering a message for the Lord (Matthew 11:10), and *a friend* of the bridegroom, Christ, whom they live to glorify (John 3:28-29; see II Corinthians 4:5). The good preacher has been sent by God (see Jeremiah 7:25-26; 25:4).

Preaching is God’s primary means of working in the world today. The preacher is likened unto **God’s mouth**, as he speaks by them (Hosea 12:10) and testifies by them (II Kings 17:13). Additionally, the preacher is likened unto **God’s hand**, who says that they are a “polished shaft” in his quiver (Isaiah 49:1-2), and an axe of destruction: “I hewed them by the prophets” (Hosea 6:5; see also Jeremiah 1:10). Through preaching, God gives his word (Psalm 68:11), opens his word (Luke 24:32), and manifests his word:

Titus 1:3: “But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour”

The Works of Preaching

The only means whereby God’s people can “prosper” is “through the prophesying” (Ezra 6:14). In the first chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul explains that God has chosen to use “the foolishness of preaching” to accomplish his works in the world. There are many things that God has limited himself to exclusively—at least, in part—perform through preaching:

- Preaching **Makes Distinctions** (I Corinthians 1:18) – as of preaching God’s laws (Leviticus 10:10-11).
- Preaching **Defeats Lies** (I Corinthians 1:19-20) – as of preaching against heresies (Titus 1:9-14).
- Preaching **Saves Souls** (I Corinthians 1:21) – as of preaching the gospel (I Corinthians 2:2).
- Preaching **Changes Lives** (I Corinthians 1:22-28) – as of preaching righteousness (Psalm 40:9).
- Preaching **Glorifies God** (I Corinthians 1:29-31) – as of preaching an effective message (see Acts 13:12, 48).

The Blessings of the Preacher

A. Preachers *have a special knowledge of the Bible*. Like the servants which drew the water who “knew” that the provision of the good wine from Jesus was a miracle (John 2:9), so also those who draw the water “of the word” (Ephesians 5:26) to the feast of God’s truth have a sort of privileged knowledge that the attendants of the congregation do not. Paul spoke of one’s preaching as a partial medium of self-edification (see I Corinthians 14:4).

Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”

B. Preachers *have a special understanding of life*. When writing Ecclesiastes, his existential work on the human condition, Solomon styled himself as “the Preacher” (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, 12; 7:27; 12:8-10; not, “the king” or “the father,” or “the teacher”). Commenting upon the vanity and the purpose of life, he shows us that, although “no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11), the preacher comes the closest to being able to do so. In many scenarios, the one who truly understands life and world events is none other than the preacher (see e.g., Haggai 1:3-11).

C. Preachers *have a special provision/protection from God*. God cares for all of his children, but it seems that those who lead his people are given a divine “secret-service” kind of protection, of whom he says, “Touch not *mine anointed*, and do *my prophets* no harm” (Psalm 105:15; I Chronicles 16:22). **Elijah** was sustained by birds (I Kings 17:1-6); **Elisha** had a host of defending angels greater than the army of the Syrians (II Kings 6:14-17); **Jeremiah** survived the Babylonian siege and destruction of Jerusalem; the **two witnesses** in the book of Revelation are given miraculous powers to accomplish the days of their testimony (Revelation 11:3-7). Accordingly, Jesus sent forth the **apostles** to the cities and villages to preach with many promises of the sustaining providence of God (Matthew 10; Luke 10).