

The Effects Of Preaching

Introduction. God could have communicated directly to man, or He could have put His will directly in man's heart. But preaching has always been the way God determined His saving message to be spread (Luke 4:18-19, 43; Mark 16:15, 20). The word "preach" or "preaching" occurs 73 times in the New Testament. This is indicative of the importance of preaching in God's redemptive plan. This lesson will examine the effects of first century preaching on sinners based on three texts.

I. Examples Of First Century Preaching

A. Peter in Acts 2:36-37.

1. He declared the evidence to prove that Jesus was the Christ of Old Testament promise. God never wanted us to believe on a whim.
2. He gave testimony that Jesus was in fact raised from the dead.
3. He finally accused the crowd of murdering the Lord and Christ.
4. The result was that "they were pricked in their hearts." The word *katanyssō* means, "to strike or prick violently, to stun, is used of strong emotion." It is used metaphorically to mean "to pain the mind sharply, agitate it vehemently" ("pierced," NASB; "came under deep conviction," HCSB). It implies the idea of sudden and acute grief. They were stunned with anguish and alarm at what Peter said.

B. Stephen in Acts 7:51-58.

1. In addressing an audience of Israelites, he showed that the history of Israel was filled with sin and rebellion. He then accused the present audience of being participants in sin and rebellion.
2. The result was that "they were cut to the heart." The word *diaprio* signifies "a sawing asunder, to divide by a saw" (cp. 1 Chronicles 20:3). Metaphorically it means "to be sawn through mentally, to be rent with vexation." They were extremely agitated with rage and indignation. This is the irritation that comes when one is struggling against his conscience.
3. The audience understood the condemnation and they were unbelievably angered by Stephen's words. They reacted by killing Stephen.

C. Paul in Acts 24:25.

1. Felix was well-known for his immoral and ungodly lifestyle. The subject matter comes as no surprise as Paul discussed "the faith in Christ."
2. Paul preached what Felix needed to hear:
 - a) Righteousness — God's way of saving and justifying men.
 - b) Temperance — "to control or master the desires of the body."
 - c) Judgment — the final judgment that is coming to all men.
3. Felix was terrified. The word *emphobos* means "to be thrown into fear." The emotions, intellect, and conscience are all involved in man's alarm as he thinks seriously about standing in judgment before Him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13). But he declined to change.

II. First Century Preaching Convicted The Hearer Of Sin

A. The hearer recognized the nature of sin.

1. Sin is a transgression of God's word (1 John 3:4).
 2. Sin is unrighteousness (1 John 5:17).
 3. Sin produces spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1-3).
 4. The one who sins is worthy of death (Romans 1:32).
 5. Sin was plainly defined and its horrific nature was explained. The people were not made to feel good or burst with emotion, but were taught what was needed to keep them out of Hell.
- B. The hearer recognized personal guilt.
1. The people at Pentecost (Acts 2:37).
 2. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:20-21).
 3. Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:5-12).
 4. Felix (Acts 24:25).
 5. The Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
 6. This was just like examples seen in Old Testament:
 - a) Joseph's brothers (Genesis 42:21).
 - b) David (Psalm 40:12).
- C. Preaching sought to bring the hearer to repentance.
1. The people at Pentecost (Acts 2:38).
 2. The people at Solomon's porch (Acts 3:19).
 3. Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:22-24).
 4. Saul (Acts 26:14-20).
 5. The letter of 1 Corinthians exposed sin.
 6. The letters to the seven churches clearly noted sin.

Conclusion. The responses varied according to the individual. Some hardened their heart and sought to eliminate the messenger. Some delayed obedience to a more convenient time which we never read of being found. Some obeyed immediately. What will it be for hearers today (2 Corinthians 7:8-11)?