

Articles and Sermons :: The Preacher's High Calling by Al Baker

The Preacher's High Calling by Al Baker - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2008/11/5 9:35

**The Preacher's High Calling**

by Al Baker

I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)

Charles Hodge and Henry Ward Beecher were 19th century contemporaries and both were leaders in the church of Christ at the time. Both also were reared in God-centred, Christ-exalting homes. One remained faithful to his biblical heritage and the other departed from it. In a sincere effort to reach the enlightened 19th century man, Beecher blinked, increasingly departing from the biblical faith, denying the doctrine of original sin, and in the end even denying the doctrine of hell. Let this be a warning to all preachers. We battle the same temptation today. In a desire to be heard, to gain a following, to appear hip or relevant, the tendency is to soften the message of the cross.

Paul never did that and neither should we. You must preach Christ crucified. What does Paul mean by this statement? Well he tells us that he did not come to the Corinthians with Greek rhetoric, Jewish wisdom, fleshly self-confidence, or false bravado. Why not? He knew the utter depravity of man, the inability of man to believe the gospel. He knew, as Ezekiel tells us in his famous vision of the valley of dry bones, our task is to preach to the dry bones. Can there be anything seemingly more foolish? Those in our towns without Christ are not merely sick spiritually. They are dead. They have no desire or appetite for the things of God. None understand. None seek God. All have turned aside. They have become useless. See Romans 3:10ff.

But Paul came to the Corinthians preaching Christ crucified. In the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom does not come to know God. Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble come to Christ. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the things which are wise, and the base things of the world, and the things which are despised. He has chosen the things which are not, that no man may boast before God. He tells them that he came to boast in nothing but the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:14). He came with confidence in the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, knowing that the kingdom of God is not mere words but power (1 Cor. 4:20). Let's break this down - you must preach Christ crucified.

1 First, you must. The true preacher has a divine call and authority. In a theological sense he derives a prophetic, apostolic authority from Christ. I am not saying modern day preachers are prophets or apostles in the historic, biblical sense, but they have a derived apostolic, prophetic authority from him. He told his disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they had been clothed with power from on high. Every preacher wants and needs that power as he preaches Christ. He needs, ought to long for the unction of the Holy Spirit on his preaching. Unction is something hard to define but you know it when you see it. When a preacher has unction the people hearing him know he has a message from God. There is a solemnity, a sense of eternity, a deep impression that God is dealing with the souls of those present.

2 Second, you must preach. The Greek words translated preach are *kerusso* and *euangelizo*. The first word has the idea of a town crier going to a town and announcing the king's message verbatim. He does not insert his own opinions. He is faithful to his king. The second is our transliterated word evangelize. The idea in preaching is that sinful man encounters the holy God. Paul, in his Areopagus address, says to the Athenians, 'What you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.' A preacher does not apologise for his message. He does not dialogue. He is not casual or flippant with it. He does not make suggestions. He proclaims life and death issues. He seeks for a verdict. He makes clear that heaven or hell, condemnation or deliverance, freedom or slavery is at stake. When Howell Harris was converted in 1735 he immediately began travelling to the towns of Wales, warning the people to flee from the wrath of God which was coming. His earnestness offended many, causing them to think him a fanatic and even threatening his life, but the power of the Spirit was on him and he did much good. You are called to preach. Your job is not primarily administration, education, counselling, or equipping. You must preach.

3 Third, you must preach Christ. All true believers have a supernatural union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (see Rom. 6:1ff; Gal. 2:20). You are to be clear on Christ's deity, his hypostatic union, his three-fold office as our prophet, priest, and king. You must not hesitate to proclaim his blessed exclusivity, that there is no other name under heaven

ven, given among men, whereby we must be saved. You are not called to preach politics, prosperity, or psychotherapy. You are not concerned with popularity but you should long to be powerful. You are to move people toward Jesus who has become to us wisdom from God (he alone has the truth because he is the truth), righteousness (he is our only means of right standing before God, being given his righteousness by faith), sanctification (we are to call people to holiness which is possible because we are indwelt by the holy Christ), and redemption (I have in mind here our eschatological redemption in heaven). Only Christ can redeem, heal, satisfy, sustain. Your job is to drive people to the river of God's grace, filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and you do so by preaching the sinfulness of man, the holiness of God, and the propitiating death of Jesus. Can man find Mt. Zion without first visiting Mt. Sinai and Mt. Calvary?

4 Fourth, you must preach Christ crucified. This was the essence of Peter's message at Pentecost (Acts 2:22-24). You are to preach Christ's death and resurrection as the only remedy for dry bones. You are to preach his humiliation, his exaltation, and his penal substitutionary atonement. You are to preach, not so much to convey more information about Christ, but for divine impression. You want people to have a supernatural encounter with God. You want them to bask in the glory of the crucified and resurrected Christ, and when they are moved to love him, then holiness necessarily follows. When people love Jesus supremely then they begin to give themselves, their money, their lives for the sake of the Kingdom. Who is sufficient for such things? Paul tells us that no one is. Yet this is in the preacher's calling. What must you do? You must be mighty in prayer. You must urge people to pray for the unction of the Spirit to be upon your preaching ministry. You are hopeless without it. Such preaching will do more good in one or two weeks than a year's worth of preaching without it.