

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING

By Scott P. Smith

I think the Lord has taught me a very deep truth about the Gospel ministry. Let's call it "Experimental Preaching."

Today, for the most part, pastors are trying to preach what they have not personally experienced nor been taught by the Holy Spirit. This problem is primarily due to the plethora of solid, reformed, experimental writings which are available to us (and this is not necessarily a bad thing!). Pastors are reading about these things, and perhaps due to tremendous gift and speaking ability ("great preachers" – so-called), they are able to preach these things as if they were their own, but in reality, they have not experienced these things themselves.

Everything is "homiletical" and smacks of a "ministerial professionalism" which is devoid of the Holy Spirit operating in the life and soul of the messenger.' It is just another form of the painted pageantry rooted in the sinful hypocrisy which has always plagued the church of Christ. Many "preachers" are just phony "wanna-be' s" who are trying to get a name for themselves and bring glory to themselves through "their ministry."

This is killing the assemblies of God's people! Why? Because none of it is REAL! It is "reformed experience" which has been read from a book and learned from a book, but never actually LIVED! It puffs one up and makes one proud and critical of others. Everything seems "pre-digested," "second-hand," and utterly plastic and phony. This type of ministry never hits the heart. Christ is not formed in the hearers.

I would guess that unbelievers can recognize this to a certain extent. Without a doubt, I know that the spiritually discerning will see through this facade and recognize it for being merely "a form of godliness without the power" a quick route to decay and death.

What is the solution? Pastors need to read their Bibles; to get their sermons from God and from their own experiences; and to cry out for the Holy Spirit to produce REAL, HONEST, SPIRITUAL Christianity in them. And then with the help of the Holy Spirit, preach! (In saying all of this, I most emphatically am NOT suggesting that unbiblical human experience or extra-biblical revelations be preached as God's Word.)

To be sure, it's fine to read the works of other men, but you must be careful not to preach something that is not real yet to YOU in your own Christian life. Dishonesty (and that's what it is!) about who you are and what you have experienced will grieve the Holy Spirit, make your ministry spiritually unfruitful, and ultimately harm yourself and God's people.

Oh, servant of God, take the light and the heat that God has given you no matter how insignificant it may seem to you -- and preach it with all your heart in the power of the Holy Spirit. Sermons of this type will have their genesis in your private prayer life and in your living communion with God. There must be a measure of personal travail over the message coupled with a real heart burden which is YOUR" burden.

What will be the result of this kind of "Experimental Preaching"? The more mature saints will take fresh delight in the more basic truths which God has taught you, so do not worry about "being on their level" or having to be "more spiritually mature" than them because "you're the pastor." The younger saints will be fed with some real, honest, spiritual food. In short, God will be glorified, and may He be pleased to bless "Experimental Preaching" to His own good ends and purposes, to the building up of His church.

--Scott P. Smith