

WHAT IS BIBLICAL PREACHING? IT'S IMPORTANCE AND PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH'S WORK

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Introduction

There are many New Testament passages, that speak of the ministry of preaching in the life of Jesus and that of the apostles. Two passages emphatically and directly endorse the fact that preaching of the Word of God is the Church's central task. The first one comes from Paul's first letter to Timothy:

...I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (2 Tim. 4:1-6).

In this passage Paul entrusts a task to his beloved disciple Timothy before the apostle's imminent death, that of preaching the Word of God. As James Crane (2003) puts it: "Timothy's chief duty was to preach...The most solemn motives drove him" (p.17). This commission from Paul to Timothy underscores the fact that the ministry of preaching is a fundamental and relevant task in the life of the church, and the pastoral ministry is central, as the preacher becomes the spokesmen of the Word that brings us all eternal life. Orlando Costas (1991) points out: "Among the multiple responsibilities of the pastor, the one that has the highest priority is preaching ... preaching is the main means of spreading the gospel and, therefore, it is a necessity" (p.21-22).

These affirmations are seconded by Martyn Lloyd-Jones (2011), who points out that preaching is an essential ministry of the church and the pastorate:

The work of preaching is the highest, the greatest, and the most glorious calling to which anyone can be called. Preaching is the main task of the Church of God. We must be people who preach the Word and long for the opportunity to hear the word preached... The church is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Therefore, there is no substitute for true biblical, theological, authoritative, and Spirit-filled preaching of the entire counsel of God (p.2).

Undoubtedly this is the New Testament structure from which current preaching develops. Therefore, today's preaching must include, not only the proclamation of the gospel for those who have not reached salvation in Christ Jesus, but also preaching to encourage and strengthens believers in their faith.

The second text refers to preaching as an integral part of the Church's mission. Mark 16:15 says: "... Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." A careful reading of this text shows Jesus' mandate to preach as a major responsibility in the missionary task of the Church. William Barclay (2008) notes: "The church has a preaching task. It is the duty of the church, and that means of every Christian, to tell the story of the Good News of Jesus to those who have not heard it. Christian duty consists in being Jesus' heralds" (p.284).

Preaching then, is a relevant part of the global missionary task of the church. This has been its role in history and today cannot be the exception.

What is Biblical Preaching?

Many books, tracts, lectures, seminars have been written on the subject of preaching. It is clear that preaching accompanies the church and its mission to the world. We need to ask whether, in our current evangelical world, pastors and the Church as a whole, perfectly understand the concept of preaching? Are the congregations still clear about the definition of this concept? So, we need to define and develop what biblical preaching really is.

Different theologians have tried to define it, some are very elaborate and technical, while others offer simple definitions that reflect a good basis for us to reflect on. Orlando Costas (1991) defines preaching as: “A dynamic act in which God addresses men and women outside and within His people, to confront them with the profound implications of His redemptive work in Christ. It is an integral act of the public worship of the church. Above all, preaching is an eschatological act, insofar as it concerns the end times and is the instrument *par excellence* of the Spirit for the salvation of mankind” (p.29).

In this more theological definition three elements can be rescued, firstly, preaching is a divine initiative; secondly, it is the work of Christ, and lastly it occurs within the framework of the activity of the Holy Spirit. This definition indicates that it is a public act of the church, as part of her worship. It is also an eschatological act of proclamation as it appeals to salvation as a future event.

Another definition, a bit outside the traditional concept, is provided by Pablo Jiménez (2009): “We can define the preaching of the gospel as the theological interpretation of life. Preaching, then, is an interdisciplinary endeavor where the study and interpretation of the Bible meets systematic theology, church history, religious education, pastoral counsel, and public speaking. Thus, preaching is an exercise in theological and pastoral integration” (p.68). This definition by Pablo Jiménez invites us to think that the ultimate purpose of preaching is to help those who believe in Christ, to live according to the teachings of the gospel, publicly leading responsible moral lives, especially in these postmodern times in which we all have to live.

John Stott (2000) brings other elements to the concept of preaching: “Preaching is conceived as the activity of building bridges between the Word and the contemporary world. Such preaching will have authority in setting forth biblical principles, and will be careful in applying them to today's complex issues of discussion” (p.171). In his epilogue, Stott concludes by mentioning “... the task of preaching today is extremely demanding, that of seeking to build bridges between the Word and the world, between divine revelation and human experience, and relate both with integrity and relevance” (p.326). The contribution that John Stott gives to the concept of preaching is considered to be significant and essential, because preaching is an art that seeks to build bridges between the teachings of Scripture and its application to lived experiences, by the public that listens.

A Catholic theologian, Domenico Grasso (1969) provides another definition: “Preaching, in our opinion, is the proclamation of the mystery of salvation, made by God himself through his legitimate representatives, for faith and conversion, and for growth in the Christian life” (p.179).

Grasso shares five elements on the definition of the concept of biblical preaching: -

1. Preaching is a proclamation that brings salvation, for that reason it must be distinguished from other types of teachings "... it is an announcement of the saving facts of God through history and humanity - God intervening in history in order to save human beings. "
2. In preaching, the main subject of the proclamation is God himself, as Grasso points out "It is He who speaks and who announces His intention to save man, calling them to faith."
3. Thirdly, there is a legitimate or qualified representative - the Church: "Preaching is, then, a function of the Church, an act and not a private gift of God to an individual man."
4. Preaching is proclaimed to produce faith and conversion, as Grasso mentions "the end of preaching is faith, the acceptance of the divine salvific plan; acceptance that involves the conversion of man. In faith, man responds positively to God, accepts His plan of salvation and grace."
5. For Grasso too, preaching brings growth in the Christian life for each believer (pp.179-180).

The *Dictionary of Theology* states that: "Preaching is the proclamation of the Word of God to people, through people, by mandate of God. It is the ordained means for the transmission of the Word of God to the world, and it also serves as a means of official grace for the edification of the church of Christ" (Harrison, 2006, p.482). An outstanding point in this definition is that preaching is a means of grace for the edification of the church, and in effect, preaching is considered to be a gift from God to human beings; through it, God speaks to the person who receives His grace.

In 1876, the American Bishop Phillips Brooks, gave a classic definition of biblical preaching in a series of lectures before students for ministry at Yale University: "Preaching is the presentation of the truth through personality...the communication of the truth by a man to men" (In Stanley Key, pp.35-36). Two key elements can be observed in this definition, the first is truth and the second personality, both cannot be separated, because it would cease to be biblical preaching. Jerry Stanley Key defines biblical preaching as: "Preaching is the faithful exposition of the correct meaning of one or more texts of the Bible. Illustrating the exposition and applying it to the lives of the listeners, involved in such a way that their needs are met, and assuming that this communication is made by a person with a real experience with Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit (p.37).

Three elements are found in Stanley Key's definition. First, there must be a faithful exposition of the biblical text, interpreting and applying the teachings of Scripture to human experiences. The second element is the agent or person, the preacher, who must have a clear conviction of their calling and vocation to the ministry of the Word. The person who occupies this position in a church has to be an instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit, living daily in intimate communion with God and cultivating a relationship with Jesus and with the people to whom they minister to with the Word. The last element is the purpose and objective of preaching, which must be the instrument that motivates change and improves the spiritual life of the listener, through faith. As Stanley Key points out, "You must help them make changes as a result of applying gospel principles to their daily lives, changes that will bring peace and happiness to the heart" (p.39).

Dr. Jonathan Salgado, mentions two fundamental things about biblical preaching: "Preaching can be biblical in two ways, when its content is biblical, proclaiming what the Bible teaches, and when it is

biblical in form, exposing the thought of a biblical passage... biblical preaching is based on the meaning and message of the Bible itself" (p. 18). He goes on to give three fundamental reasons for the advantages of preaching biblically: "1. Biblical preaching helps in the edification, permanence and spiritual maturity of the church... 2. Biblical preaching encourages variety in the pastor's ministry. To preach the Bible faithfully and systematically is to find an infinity of themes in its development... 3. Biblical preaching makes the pulpit real and practical" (pp.83-84).

A final definition of preaching is provided by Martyn Lloyd-Jones: -

Preaching is establishing the connection between God and His people through His Word. Preaching is a transmission between the pastor and the congregation. It is the announcement of the entire counsel of God to all who will listen. Preaching is designed to influence and affect the whole person at the very center of life... Through preaching, God addresses the church through the Holy Spirit. He brings the church under conviction of lawlessness, and speaks of the promises of God in the gospel... Through faithful preaching, the church of God learns and grows in its understanding of the law and the gospel as found throughout the Scriptures (p.3).

Three elements follow from Lloyd-Jones' definition. The first element is that God himself, is the main author of preaching. Secondly, human beings, are the receivers of the message and those who should treasure God's counsel. Finally, the Word, contains God's message for His people.

In conclusion, we can say that we cannot define preaching in only one way, which is why we need to resort to different definitions, that underscore the significant and valuable elements important to the concept of biblical preaching.

The Purpose of Preaching

Scriptures tell us that since it's inauguration, the Church, as God's people, is the community of the Word. Three important elements fundamental to the purpose of preaching the Word of God, will be discussed next. They are not listed in order of priorities as each one is equally important.

First of all, there is an ecclesiastical purpose. Through the counsel of the Word, the church, the body of Christ will receive guidance, be fed, protected and edified. Secondly, preaching is vital for evangelism as it reaches out to people who do not know about God and are not living in obedience to His Word. In this case, preaching will result in reconciliation with God and changed lives. Finally, there is a transformational purpose in each person's context. Preaching seeks to change not only the personal but also the social environment, starting from within us and leading out to those around us.

Preaching to Edify the Church.

Scriptures presents us with some figures referring to the task of caring for, guiding, feeding and edifying the church. These metaphors are also relevant to the preaching of the Word of God. The first figure that comes to mind is the one found in Psalm 23, where God is the shepherd and the believer His sheep. "He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters... Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Ps. 23: 2,4). These two verses remind us that in God "we have a life of stable security... and the

experience of moving forward, even when there is thick darkness on the way... The dominant concept is that of God as guide and protector through the vicissitudes of the life" (Guthrie, 1996, p. 353).

In John 10: 11-15, Jesus too likens himself to a shepherd who is both good and protective. Jesus takes care of His flock, the believers. Barclay points out: "The authentic shepherd never hesitated to risk and even give his life to save his sheep from any danger that threatened them" (p.441).

Psalm 119: 105 compares Scripture with the figure of a lamp, which not only illuminates our lives, but also the path that everyone who believes in God must travel. Guthrie points out in this regard: "The whole of Bible becomes a practical guide ... for the next step, as well as for the most remote destination" (p.397).

2 Timothy 3: 16-17 explains what the Word of God does in the life of the believer; Scripture builds the people of God up in their faith. Here we can see that Scripture edifies individual Christians through the reading and study of the Bible. The church, as a body, is built up through the preaching of God's Word. Barclay applies this passage: "The study of the Scriptures trains and qualifies the person in integrity until it equips them for every good work... Christians should study the Scriptures to become useful to God and to their fellowmen. No one is saved unless they are passionately committed to saving others" (p.850).

James Crane (2003) in his book *The Effective Sermon* lists the fundamental purposes of preaching for the life of the church:

1. There is a doctrinal purpose in preaching: "This is the didactic purpose, that is, instruction for believers, making them see the meaning of the great truths of the Christian faith and indicating how they can make practical application to daily life. Sermons that have this primary purpose are classified as doctrinal sermons" (p.65).
2. There is a devotional importance: "This is the purpose of intensifying in believers the feeling of loving devotion to God, as well as guiding them in the proper expression of the worship that God deserves. Sermons intended for this purpose are classified as devotional sermons" (p.67).
3. Preaching can be a call to consecration: "This type of preaching encourages believers to dedicate their life, talents, and time to the service of God ... In this type of preaching emphasis rests on Christian service" (p.68).
4. There is an ethical-moral purpose: "This type of sermon seeks to help believers to regulate their daily conduct and social relationships in accordance with Christian principles... The frequent attention given to moral issues in the Bible, and the variety of the social conditions found in the contemporary world, come together to demand from the Christian pulpit a clear and helpful word on moral issues" (p.69).
5. Finally, preaching is intended to encourage the believers. "This type of preaching seeks to strengthen and encourage believers in the midst of trials and crises in their personal lives" (p.70).

It seems that these five elements that Crane contemplates demonstrate the purpose of preaching for building up and strengthening the church.

Preaching and Evangelism.

Preaching seeks the conversion of the person who does not know Christ. Preaching must touch, confront and convict the lives of the unconverted, so that they can yearn for change and search for God. Stanley Key (2009), mentions that preaching in evangelism must carry the intention of causing a change in the listeners, so that they make decisions and actions towards conversion: “The purpose of preaching is to meet the needs of the listeners. These needs begin with salvation in Christ and spiritual growth in discipleship, after the experience of receiving Him as Savior and Lord ... The apostles Peter and Paul exhorted, admonished and persuaded their listeners, seeking to lead them to concrete decisions and actions of change in their lives (Acts 2:40; 4: 4, 33; 5:14; 26: 26-28)” (pp.39-40).

The purpose of preaching in evangelism must always be to change lives; to see the work that the Holy Spirit does in the listeners helping them to repent, experience conversion and transform their lives. If this is not achieved, then the expectations of the aims of evangelism in preaching are not being met. On this subject, Rick Warren, a contemporary preacher from the United States comments: “If our preaching is not directed to change lives, then we are not fulfilling the what the Bible lays claims, that God’s purpose is to help people to change, making them Christlike” (2017, p.7). This same pastor and preacher later in his article once again points out more emphatically: “Preaching for repentance is the most profound form of preaching... Teaching the Word of God for any reason other than to change lives, is a misuse of the Bible” (p.19).

Preaching the gospel must be fundamental, reaching those who do not have Christ in their hearts. As they listen to God’s invitation and are convicted of their need though God’s Word, they will have an opportunity to repent, confess and surrender to Christ.

Preaching to transform the social environment of the person.

We believe that two of the fundamental purposes of preaching are to feed believers spiritually, and to convince, convert and reconcile those who are separated and far from God’s presence and do not have a relationship with Him. We must also contemplate a third purpose which is that preaching seeks to transform the lives and social environments in which people live. Pablo Jiménez (2009), affirms the following: “the preaching of the gospel calls us to enter into a relationship with God, so that it transforms our lives. This transformation is comprehensive, that is, it is both personal and social. The person who develops and cultivates a relationship with God is transformed by the encounter with the sacred” (p.56).

Biblical, healthy and clear preaching should not take us away from the personal and social context in which our people live, much less create false realities; rather good preaching should bring us closer to people, towns, cities becoming a part of their environments with the sole purpose of carrying out ministries that transform the people from within, thus impacting their surroundings. Jiménez once again mentions on this point: “It should be clear, then, that we preach the gospel with the purpose of transforming reality, seeking the Utopia of the Kingdom. Utopia does not mean lies or folk tales. No. Literally, "utopia" is a concept that does not have a place (*topos*, in Greek) in the world where we live. What we are looking for, then, is that which does not yet have a place in our lives, but which will materialize” (p.56). Jesus Christ’s message that is translated into Good News, transforms the lives of all

those who come to meet Him, must be the motive of biblical preaching, inciting the church to work for the transformation, not only, of the person, but of their family, workplace and social environment.

I would like to close this subtopic, citing the homiletics professor Carlos A. Jiménez: “We people who are part of the Church of Jesus Christ have to fight for the life in our communities and for our different countries. May God give us strength, courage and perseverance to reach the goal of preaching: the creation of a new people of God, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (p. 57). There is no better final reflection than the one left by Carlos Jiménez, that of building in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, a forgiven people, a transformed people and a holy people, who glorify and exalt the name of the Lamb of God.

The Importance of Biblical Preaching

The ministry of preaching has been central to the life and work of believers from the day of Pentecost onwards. John Stott, spoke about the supremacy of preaching in the life of the Church: “Preaching is indispensable for the Christian. Without it, a necessary part of its authenticity is lost, since Christianity is, by its very essence, the religion of the Word of God” (p.13). This subtopic deserves to be addressed with great relevance, since it sheds light on the importance that preaching has had and continues to have in the work of the Christian church. There are several questions that need to be answered regarding the importance of preaching today.

Why was preaching important to Jesus? What was the supreme charge that Christ made to His disciples at the end of His earthly ministry? Why was preaching important and central in the ministry of the Apostle Paul? Why has preaching been important in the work of the Church throughout its history?

Jesus and Preaching

The Gospel of Mark 1:14 introduces us to the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry, after the imprisonment of John the Baptist. Mark tells us: “After John was imprisoned, Jesus went to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.” Later in that same chapter, in verses 38 and 39, we read the following: “He said to them: We are going to neighboring places so that I may also preach there, because for this I have come. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and cast out demons.”

It is interesting that at the beginning of his Gospel, Mark introduces us to Jesus preaching, something which the Lord said He had come to do. Donald Guthrie refers to Mark 1:38 and Luke 4:43 where it reads: “...I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” For Guthrie the phrase “*this is why I was sent*”, probably refers not to his departure from the city but to the mission entrusted to him by the Father” (p.642). Stanley Key points out why preaching was important in the life of Jesus, taking the references from Mark 1:38 and Luke 4: 4: “Christ said that preaching would be of great importance in His ministry because he came with this purpose” (p.32). There are other biblical citations within the four gospels where there are numerous references to the ministry of preaching in the life of Jesus. For instance, in Matthew 9:35, Jesus’ preaching accompanied his ministry of teaching and healing through miracles.

To answer the question, why was preaching important in Jesus' ministry? The answer is very obvious; it was the mandate of His Father and that was why He came. The four Gospels bear witness to the innumerable occasions in which Jesus made use of preaching, thus fulfilling the commission given to Him by His Father.

Jesus' Supreme Mandate to His Disciples.

Why was preaching important to the disciples? It is very easy to answer this question, but it also carries a lot of weight as we meditate on the answer, because this answer brings many challenges for the Christian church today. The commission that Jesus gave his disciples is found in the classic passages of Scripture. Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19 are two key passages which guide us in answering the question. The passage from Mark will be employed to answer this subsection. Most accept that Mark's gospel was the first to be written and that it formed the basis for the other Synoptic Gospels. Deossa, (2012) comments on this passage: "... Go into all the world and preach the gospel. Preaching is considered to be the supreme appeal that Jesus made to His disciples before ascending to heaven. Someone pointed out that 'The last and greatest commission that the Lord Jesus gave to his Church was the command to preach.'" (p.1).

The Book of Acts gives enough information regarding the ministry of preaching in the life of the first disciples, who understood the commission to which Jesus had called them. In Acts 2: 14-41, Peter's first preaching is narrated, it was a simple message, but with a Christ-centered depth, full of all the authority and power of the Holy Spirit. The result of that preaching is found at the end of the passage in verse 41 that says "... and there were added that day about three thousand people."

In Acts 3:11-4: 4, Peter is preaching again and many people were converted. Acts 4:4 tells us: "But many who heard the message believed; so, the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand. But many of those who had heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand". Another reference is Acts 4:31 which says "... After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with courage". The presence of the Holy Spirit in the disciples was key in the preaching of the Word.

All of them were committed to the preaching of the Word, even one of the deacons named Philip was involved in the preaching (Acts 8: 26-40). The *Contemporary Biblical Commentary* mentions this clearly pointing out the following: "In Acts 6 the apostles understood that the priority of their ministry was prayer and the ministry of the Word, and they jealously guarded that nothing diverted them from this central focus. As a result, the Word of God spread and the number of disciples increased... It is worth making biblical preaching our priority and dedicating to it all the time it deserves" (Padilla, 2019, p.1957).

On this understanding of the disciples' call and vocation to the ministry of preaching, another author mentions the seriousness and responsibility with which they assumed this ministry: "Apostles like Simon Peter, John, and Paul were undoubtedly great preachers, as was Stephen. The preaching was approached with great seriousness as we can verify it in Acts... The apostles wanted to give the best of themselves to the spiritual ministry. The ministry was their priority. Peter tells Cornelius that the Lord Jesus Christ had been sent us to preach to the people..." (Stanley Key, pp.32-33).

So why was preaching important in the ministry of the disciples? The answer is because preaching was the supreme commission that Jesus gave them; They had been called to preach.

Preaching in Paul's ministry.

Preaching was fundamental in the ministry of the apostle Paul; his conviction was such that he knew what the Lord Jesus had called him to. Paul's conviction is reflected in some of his letters. Very emphatically Paul responds to the Corinthian Church about their vocation to the ministry of the Word, when he writes to them in 1 Cor. 1:17 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power." Victor Deossa comments about this response "Paul made it known to the Corinthian congregation that the Lord had sent him to do one thing only, to preach the gospel of the Good News" (p.1).

In 1 Cor. 9:16 Paul writes: "For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" William Barclay comments on Paul's statement: "He considered it a duty. Paul's view was that if he had chosen to be a preacher of the Gospel, he could have legitimately demanded a salary for his work; But he hadn't chosen that job, the job had chosen him. He couldn't stop doing it, just as he couldn't stop breathing, and therefore he couldn't stop announcing Christ" (p.631).

Lastly, Paul refers again to his ministerial commission in Tit. 1: 3: "...and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior." Guthrie states about Paul's call to be a preacher: "... *entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior*," says Paul, by direct commission of God himself, who can save us" (p.877).

Who could refute Paul about the call he had received from the Lord Jesus Christ to preach the Word of God? When reading Acts 9:15, the Lord Jesus himself mentions the purpose of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, when he sends Ananias to Damascus to pray for him "...Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel." How were the Gentiles, the kings and the people of Israel going to know about Jesus? Through the preaching of the Apostle Paul, the first missionary of the Christian era to carry the preaching of the gospel outside the borders of Israel.

The Importance of Preaching in the Life of the Christian Church.

The question that arises at the conclusion of this subtopic is why is biblical preaching important in the Christian church of our time? Carl J. Sanders emphasized the importance of preaching by noting the following: "History proves that the church can exist without buildings, without liturgy, without choirs, without Sunday Schools, without professional clergy, without creeds, and even without ecclesiastical societies. But very likely it cannot exist without the preaching of the Word. Preaching has more power than anything else the church has or does"(Sanders in Olford, 2005, p.5).

What follows is a quick overview of five basic answers to answer the question that was posed at the beginning of this subtopic:

1. Preaching deals with the lives of the lost. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 1:21: "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe." For Paul, preaching is the means that God uses to reach the lost. E.G. White says when referring to this subject: "the preaching of the gospel is God's chosen agent for the Salvation of souls. Preaching plays an important role in salvation, since as the Apostle Paul said in Romans 10:17 "So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (White in Ferreira, 2012, paragraph 6).
2. The preaching and the fulfillment of the mission. The church has a commission from the Lord Jesus that it must fulfill, and that is to transmit the Good News of salvation, carried out mainly through the preaching of the Word of God. C. B. Hayne indicates the following: "Christianity, as a message, will be propagated through preaching. As truth, it will be taught through preaching. As a body of doctrine, it will be explained through preaching. As life, it will be imparted through preaching" (Hayne in Ferreira, paragraph 7).
3. The preaching and growth of the church. Preaching is essential in the development of the church, the Book of Acts bears witness to the way in which the church was born and developed through the ministry of preaching (2: 14-41, 4: 31-33, 6: 1-2). MacArthur affirms the following: "The ministry of the Word is the main spiritual weapon in the arsenal of the church, the only seed for the planting of new congregations, the tool for the edification of new believers and the primary strategy in the plan of God to disciple the nations... Preaching is the heart, the blood and the entire circulatory system of the church and its growth" (MacArthur in Ebby (2009), p. 9).
4. Preaching and revival. One of the indispensable elements in the great spiritual revivals that the history of the church has experienced, is that of the powerful preaching of the Word of God. With this the writer Martin Lloyd-Jones agrees when he affirms: "... it demonstrates, first of all, this simple fact: that the Christian church has spoken with authority in each one of these periods. The great characteristic of all revivals has been the authority of the preacher" (Lloyd-Jones in Ferreira, Paragraph 9). Stanley Key also agrees with the close relationship between powerful preaching of the Word and revival movements:

Preaching has been closely linked, through the centuries, with revival movements. John Wesley and George Whitefield, in England and North America, respectively; Americans Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, Billy Graham and others, from various countries, demonstrate how God has mightily used his heralds in the preaching of God's Word.... Wesley was partly responsible for the fact that England did not go through a bloody revolution like the one that decimated France (p.34).

5. Preaching and pastoral care. Preaching has been of vital importance in the care and spiritual and pastoral development of the church. In John 21:15, Jesus gives Peter a momentous task to "feed my sheep." It is interesting to note that the spiritual health of the church is totally related to the nourishment that the Word of God offers to each believer (Lk. 4: 4). Each congregation needs its spiritual food, which the good exposition of the Word of God brings. Yeury Ferreira points out the following when referring to this issue: "Only the exposition of the Word of God can supply that need. The church that receives the Bread of life through preaching will enjoy strong Christians. On the contrary, the one that lacks biblical preaching will witness the apostasy and decay of its members" (paragraph 11).

Conclusions

A final question, who can assess the influence and contribution that Jesus, Paul, the disciples, and great preachers have made to biblical preaching throughout the history of the Christian church? Preaching has played a pivotal role in the growth and development of the Church. When a person called by God to this holy ministry understands the importance, value and relevance of preaching, they will make preaching the priority in their ministry, dedicating their best to it, becoming faithful messengers of God's Word.

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